

INTRODUCTION  
TO  
BIBLE STUDY  
—  
PAINTER



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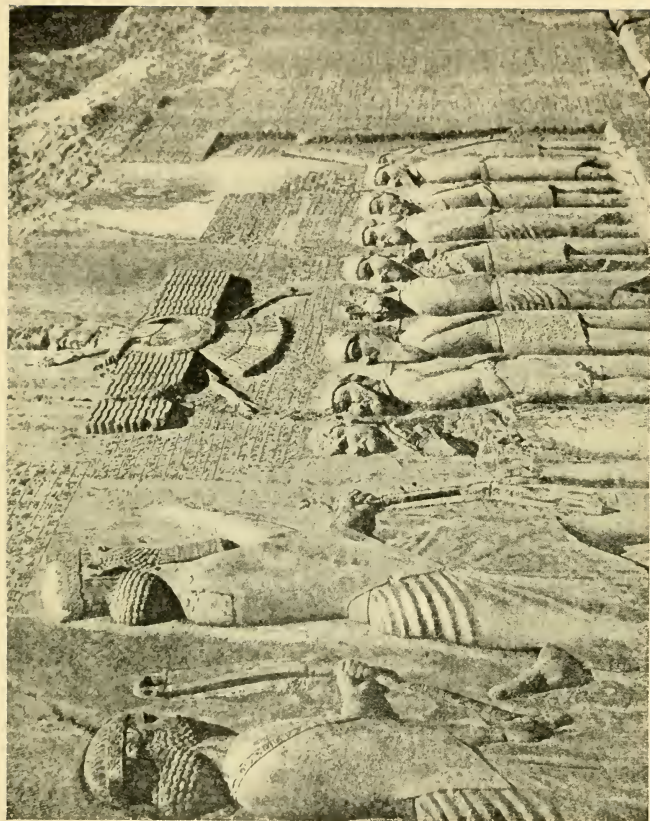
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A DETAIL OF THE BEHISTUN ROCK SHOWING DARIUS AND THE REBEL LEADERS

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|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------|
| I. Attendant               | V. Nidintu-Bêl.            | IX. Vahyazdâta |
| II. Darius the Great       | VI. Fravartish (Phraortes) | X. Arakha      |
| III. The prostrate Gaumâta | VII. Martiya               | XI. Frâda      |
| IV. Atrina                 | VIII. Citrantakhma         | XII. Skunkha   |

# INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE STUDY

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

✓  
BY

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SIBLEY & COMPANY

BOSTON

CHICAGO

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Norwood Press  
J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.  
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.



## PREFACE

As every one knows, the number of books on the Bible is very great. No other volume, not even Shakespeare, has called forth so large a body of literature. But of all that has been written there are very few books that have been prepared with pedagogical insight to meet the wants of young students. It is in view of this need that the present work—not fruitlessly, the author hopes—has been prepared.

The purpose of this book is to set forth the literary, historical, and ethical value of the Bible. It aims to present the principal facts that every intelligent person ought to know. It directs the students' attention chiefly to the Bible itself; and as a literary, historical, and ethical study, the Scriptures will be found, in the case of many readers, to be a book of unsuspected interest and value.

There is, at the present time, a wide and somewhat insistent demand for Bible study in our schools. It has been shown by actual test that a large majority of the students in our colleges are lamentably ignorant of the incidents and characters of sacred history. Yet the facts and truths of the Bible are wrought into the very texture of modern civilization, and ought, therefore, as a matter of culture, to be carefully studied.

The restricted purpose of the present volume as a textbook naturally determines its method. After an introductory chapter showing the relation of the Bible to modern life, the historic conditions, in which the Old

Testament originated, will be considered. The discoveries of recent years have greatly enriched this field of inquiry. The several books will then be classified and studied in some detail. Their character and purpose, with an analysis of their contents, will be given, after which the student will be in a position to read intelligently the passages indicated for research work.

The author has tried to make a subject that is usually regarded irksome interesting and instructive. From the standpoint of modern scholarship, the Bible has acquired a new and surpassing interest. Instead of being, as some are led to believe, an obsolete book, it is seen to possess a meaning and message for the modern world. Its fundamental ethical and religious truths are suited to every age.

It will be observed that a considerable number of footnotes have been introduced. In nearly all cases, these notes are from the pens of eminent biblical scholars, and serve either to reënforce the statements of the text or to open up new aspects of the subject. It is hoped that they will prove, not an encumbrance but a valuable addition.

The research work, which approaches the subject from a different standpoint in each chapter, will be found to have the force of a cumulative method. It may be safely claimed that a reasonably faithful use of the book will give both a comprehensive and a particular acquaintance with the Scriptures. Should the book at the same time contribute something to the revival of a vigorous moral sense in our country, it would have a still higher excellence.

F. V. N. P.

ROANOKE COLLEGE,  
Feb. 15, 1911.

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# INTRODUCTION TO BIBLE STUDY

## CHAPTER I

### RELATION OF THE BIBLE TO MODERN LIFE

**Modern Civilization.** — Our modern civilization is drawn chiefly from three great historic sources. The refinement of our literary and artistic taste is due chiefly to the ancient Greeks. They have taught us the beauty of form. Our legal system has descended to us, in large measure, from ancient Rome. The city of the Tiber has bequeathed us law. Our religion has come from the ancient Hebrews. They have taught us the great truths of God and personal righteousness.

It may be justly claimed that the Hebrew or religious element in modern life is the most valuable contribution of the ancient world. An enlightened conscience counts for more than does a cultivated taste or legal forms. It is the religious element that distinguishes Christian from pagan civilization — that exalts individual life, and begets the highest national welfare. The sacred Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament are the sources of this important element in modern life.

**Culture Value.** — The chief elements of culture are breadth of knowledge and delicacy of feeling. With this truth in mind, it will be readily seen that the Bible is a potent means of culture. On many subjects it is a

storehouse of information. It is our principal source book for the history of the ancient Hebrews. It contains the biographies of great personages — Moses, Jesus, Paul — who have left a permanent impress upon the history of mankind. It is filled with the noblest moral and religious sentiment; and our race has only to live up to the great principle of loving God with all the heart, and our neighbors as ourselves, in order to realize the kingdom of heaven on earth.

**Carlyle's Testimony.** — The great Scotchman, Thomas Carlyle, had a keen insight into the educational value of the Bible. He regarded books, particularly the sacred Scriptures, as the great educators of to-day. "In the poorest cottage," he says, "are books; is one Book, wherein for several thousands of years the spirit of man has found light, and nourishment, and an interpreting response to whatever is deepest in them; wherein still, to this day, for the eye that will look well, the mystery of existence reflects itself, if not resolved, yet revealed, and prophetically emblemed; if not to the satisfying of the outward sense, yet to the opening of the inward sense, which is the far grander result."<sup>1</sup>

**Experience of Ruskin.** — Among the masters of English prose in the nineteenth century was John Ruskin. In his autobiography he traces his literary culture, in large measure, to his early study of the Bible. "My mother forced me," he says, "by steady toil, to learn long chapters of the Bible by heart; as well as to read it every syllable through, aloud, hard names and all, from Genesis to the Apocalypse, about once a year; and to that discipline — patient, accurate, and resolute — I owe, not only a knowledge of the book, which I

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle's Works, Vol. XVI., p. 125.



find occasionally serviceable, but much of my general power of taking pains, and the best part of my taste in literature." <sup>1</sup>

**Fundamental View of the World.** — The greatest question that can engage the thoughts of men is the origin and purpose of the world. Whence came the globe upon which we live, and all the shining hosts of the sky? Whence came man, with all his wondrous faculties, and what is the purpose of his being? These questions have engaged the attention of all thoughtful peoples, and called forth various answers. Thus we have the pantheism of the Brahman, the materialism of the Greek, and the agnosticism of modern times.

But the most rational and most satisfying philosophy of life is found in the Scriptures. It is the prevailing view of all Christian nations. According to this fundamental view, which is distinguished as *theism*, we believe that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth"; <sup>2</sup> or, as Paul expresses it, that "of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things." <sup>3</sup> Behind the visible world is an omnipresent personal Being, who orders all things in wisdom and love. "In Him we live and move and have our being." <sup>4</sup>

**Source of Christianity.** — Christianity, which is the faith of about one-fourth of the population of the globe, is one of the great world religions. Though it is perhaps out-numbered by Buddhism, Christianity is the religion of the most enlightened and most powerful nations of the earth. It is making more rapid progress to-day than any other religion; and if the visions of its prophetic seers are to be realized, it is destined to become the religion of all peoples. In the language of the second

<sup>1</sup> Ruskin's "Præterita," ch. I.    <sup>2</sup> Gen. I : I.    <sup>3</sup> Rom. II : 36.    <sup>4</sup> Acts 17 : 28.

Psalm, the heathen will become His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth His possession.<sup>1</sup>

The source of this advancing and triumphant religion is found in the facts and truths of the Bible. Old Testament history laid the foundation by substituting a pure monotheism for the polytheistic idolatry of surrounding nations. On this foundation there arose, in the fulness of time, the gospel of Christ with its reclaiming truth and power. Since his brief ministry in the world, the new religion has continued to extend its influence until to-day the whole world feels its power.

**Ecclesiastical Organizations.** — Though Christianity is essentially a religion of the soul, it has naturally assumed an outward form. The individual followers of Christ have felt the invisible bonds of a divine brotherhood; and in the interests of their own religious life, as well as for the propagation of their faith, they early associated themselves in congregations. These congregations, moved by the same impulse, gradually grouped themselves in larger bodies, which had their limits set by national boundaries or by considerations of administrative efficiency. At a later time differences of theological belief created new divisions. In these various ways originated the national churches of to-day, and the great divisions of Protestantism and Roman Catholicism. Unfortunately these ecclesiastical organizations have in many cases failed to exemplify the pure and unselfish precepts of the gospel.

But however great the differences in other respects, all parts of the Christian church agree in their profound reverence for the sacred Scriptures. The Bible is regarded by them all as the original source of the articles of faith and of the rules of life. It is made prominent in all as-

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 2: 8.

semblies of worship; and week after week without ceasing, it is officially expounded to deepen the spiritual life and to sanctify the daily conduct. It is multiplied by great publication societies, and systematically scattered among all nations and tongues.

**Modern Democracy.** — For more than a hundred years a great democratic movement has been going forward throughout Christendom. At the close of the eighteenth century that movement strongly manifested itself in the popular uprising of the American and the French revolutions. Its fundamental principle, as stated in the Declaration of Independence, is equality in civil rights. With the adoption of this principle, all artificial distinctions, such as master and slave, nobles and commons, kings and subjects, are forever done away.

Whatever may have been the immediate agencies that led to a recognition of the principle of civil equality, there can be little doubt that it rests ultimately on a great truth of the New Testament. That truth is the fatherhood of God, and the consequent brotherhood of man. When Jesus declared "all ye are brethren," He broke down once for all the barriers of caste, and nullified the arrogant assumptions of a privileged nobility and absolute sovereigns by divine right. In its fundamental teachings the Bible is unquestionably democratic.

**Relation to Education.** — Though there was much in the education of pagan antiquity that was admirable, it remained for Christianity to extend the blessings of culture to all classes of society. As we have just seen, it recognizes the endless worth of the individual as a child of God. The faculties with which men are endowed are regarded as talents which are to be improved and employed in the service of righteousness. As a logical consequence

of these truths, no one, whether high or low, rich or poor, male or female, is to be excluded from the blessings of education. The obligation of universal education is thus seen to be involved in the fundamental teachings of the Bible.

It is a notable fact that popular education to-day is due to a movement originating in the need of Bible study. It was a fundamental principle of the Protestant reformation of the sixteenth century that the Scriptures are the only rule of religious faith and life. This principle brought with it the obligation to place every one in a position to read the Bible; and thus, by a logical necessity from its principles, Protestantism became the mother of popular education. Luther and the other great Protestant reformers became earnest and successful advocates of public schools.

**An Interesting Example.** — The relation of Bible study to public schools is that of cause and effect. This fact is clearly brought out in the remarkable action of the General Court of Massachusetts in 1647. In promulgating an order for the establishment of primary schools, the Court explained its action as follows: "It being one chief project of the old deluder Satan to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as in former times by keeping them in an unknown tongue, so in these latter times by persuading from the use of tongues, that so at least the true sense and meaning of the original might be clouded by false glosses of saint-seeming deceivers; that learning may not be buried in the grave of our fathers in the church and commonwealth, the Lord assisting our endeavors,

"It is therefore *ordered*, that every township in this jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him



to write and read, etc.”<sup>1</sup> This was the beginning of popular education in our country.

**Position of Woman.**—The fundamental teachings of the Bible have contributed immensely to the social elevation of woman. Though parts of the Scriptures reflect the Oriental customs of the time, as in the polygamy of Abraham and the harem of Solomon, the statement of underlying principles is altogether in favor of woman's elevation and independence. In the first chapter of Genesis it is clearly announced that woman, no less than man, is created in the image of God. Through many centuries the feeling, often obscure and unrecognized, that woman is a child of God has combated and gradually overcome many of the prejudices and wrongs descending from barbarous ages and Oriental countries. It is chiefly due to the influence of Scripture teaching that woman is no longer a slave or chattel, as in ancient times and in non-Christian lands to-day.

In recent decades the moral sense of Europe and America—a sense developed through Christian teaching—has accomplished very much in securing for woman her natural rights. The same sense of justice that swept away caste and abolished African slavery, also moved for the liberation of woman. She now has a large measure of legal independence. Her property and earnings are her own; they cannot, against her will, be appropriated by her husband. Nearly all occupations are now open to her as a means of earning an honest livelihood.

Though woman is generally excluded from political life, she shares in the larger social and intellectual interests of our time; and through various organizations, as in local leagues and national unions, she has wrought mightily for

<sup>1</sup> Painter's "History of Education," p. 383.

the moral betterment of the nation. In place of being kept in ignorance, as in ancient Athens, she has the same educational advantages as man, and her sphere of usefulness is vastly enlarged. Thus, though the fundamental teachings of Scripture have not yet found complete exemplification, they have achieved much for the freedom and social elevation of woman.

**Marriage.**—In no other particular, perhaps, has the Bible accomplished more for the elevation of woman and the welfare of society than in its teachings about marriage. In the midst of the polygamous Orient, the Bible made marriage consist in the union of one man and one woman for life. The wife is not to be the slave of her husband; she is to be “a help meet for him,”<sup>1</sup> and the two are to work together in the most intimate bonds of love and helpfulness in fulfilling the destinies of life. “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh.”<sup>2</sup>

The teachings of Jesus in regard to marriage and divorce are very explicit and forcible. The author of the book of Deuteronomy, influenced by Oriental custom, had permitted the husband on a slight pretext to divorce his wife.<sup>3</sup> This procedure was at once a degradation of woman and a danger to society. The attempt of the Pharisees to entrap Jesus in His teachings led Him to repudiate the easy Deuteronomic method of dissolving the marriage tie. He concluded His interesting and profound discussion in these words: “Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery;

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 2: 18.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 2: 24.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 24: 1.

and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." <sup>1</sup>

It is the Scriptural view of marriage that prevails throughout Christendom to-day. It is commonly celebrated by a clergyman as a religious rite. It is made a union for life; and according to Scripture teaching, its celebration is generally attended with emphatic admonitions to love and fidelity. Under the influence of the Bible, we have outgrown the loose polygamous notions and practices of the Orient, and now punish bigamy or polygamy as a crime.

**Slavery.** — The Bible does not directly prohibit slavery. In accordance with ancient and Oriental custom, slavery is permitted in the Old Testament. Both in Exodus and Deuteronomy, we find laws for the regulation of slavery, and for the mitigation of its barbarity. Unlike the practice elsewhere in the ancient world, the old Hebrew master did not have the power of life and death over his slaves, but was required to treat them with humanity, and to give them freedom after six years of service. Only by the choice of the slave himself did he become, by special ceremony, a bondman for life.

But in the case of slavery, as in some other important interests, it is the fundamental principle or spirit of the Scriptures that has been effective in overcoming wrong. The slave, no less than the master, is a child of God, who is "without respect of persons." <sup>2</sup> The equality of all classes in sharing the blessings of the gospel is explicitly and repeatedly set forth. As Paul declares, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ." <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 19: 8, 9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. 1: 17.

<sup>3</sup> Gal. 3: 28.

A beautiful illustration of the spirit of the gospel is given in the case of Onesimus, a slave who had robbed his master Philemon at Colossæ and fled to Rome. There he came under the influence of Paul, by whom he was converted to Christianity. By the advice of the apostle, the converted slave consented to return to his former master. He bore with him a letter from Paul to Philemon, in which we recognize at once the soul of courtesy and the depth of Christian love. The apostle calls Onesimus, not a slave, but "my own son"; and he tenderly entreats Philemon to receive the runaway "not now as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, both in the flesh and in the Lord."<sup>1</sup> Thus, without any formal denunciation of slavery, Paul dissolves it in the riches of a Christian love and brotherhood.

**Economic Questions.**—Though the Bible is not a book on political economy, it announces ethical principles that bear upon all the industrial and commercial relations of life. On the one hand, it denounces the spirit of avarice, dishonesty, and oppression, out of which have grown all the wrongs that have disturbed the industrial conditions of the past and that lie at the basis of the industrial conflicts of the present. Thus Paul, after speaking of the temporary character of wealth, continues: "They that desire to be rich fall into a temptation and snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil; which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many arrows."<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, a positive and all-embracing principle, which has been well designated the Golden Rule, has

<sup>1</sup> Phil. 1: 16.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. 6: 9, 10 (R.V.).

been laid down for the guidance of all social life. "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you," said the great Master, "do ye even so to them."<sup>1</sup> On another occasion Jesus emphasized this positive principle still more strongly. When a Pharisee, wishing to put him to confusion, inquired which was the greatest of all the commandments, Jesus answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."<sup>2</sup>

The tendency to substitute a religion of forms for a religion of righteousness has existed in every age. This tendency manifested itself among the ancient Hebrews as it is to be seen in many parts of the church to-day. It was this tendency which permitted a man at the same time to be religious and unjust in his social relations, that evoked some of the most eloquent denunciations of the Old Testament prophets. "Bring no more vain oblations," exclaims Isaiah, as he speaks in the name of Jehovah; "incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and Sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with;<sup>3</sup> it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."<sup>4</sup>

**Literature.** — The literature of Europe and America may be fairly characterized as a Christian literature. The ethical and religious principles that pervade its warp and woof are drawn more or less directly from the Bible. The serious

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 7: 12.

<sup>3</sup> That is, *put up with*, or *endure*.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 22: 37-40.

<sup>4</sup> Is. 1: 13-17.



intellectual activity of the Middle Ages—an activity characterized by rare acuteness—was devoted chiefly to a discussion of dogmas or truths originally derived from the Scriptures. At the present time a considerable part of our voluminous publications deals with historical, ethical, or theological questions started by the Bible.

It is notable that some of the greatest poems of modern times treat of biblical themes. Dante's "*Divina Commedia*" records the incidents of an imaginative visit to hell, purgatory, and heaven as these localities were conceived of in the fourteenth century. Milton's great epic, based on the opening chapters of Genesis, thus states its theme in the opening lines:—

"Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,  
With loss of Eden, till one greater man  
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,  
Sing, heavenly Muse."

Likewise Goethe's great poem of "*Faust*" sets forth Scriptural truth. It teaches, as does the book of Ecclesiastes, the insufficiency of knowledge, self-indulgence, power, and æsthetic culture, to satisfy the deep longings of our nature. It reaches the conclusion that only the spirit of love and of unselfish labor for others can bring deep-seated peace and joy. The great tragedies of Shakespeare—*King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*—are only illustrations of the biblical principle that "the wages of sin is death."<sup>1</sup>

**Lyrical Poetry.**—In addition to these long and celebrated poems, the number of which might be indefinitely extended, the Scriptures have inspired an incalculable quantity of lyrical verse. There is scarcely a prominent

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 6: 23.



poet of Europe or America who has not somewhere treated of biblical truth or biblical incident. The writers of religious lyrics, many of which find a place in our hymn-books, are literally to be numbered by the hundred. Even the less serious poets, like Thomas Moore and Lord Byron, sometimes turn aside from their mocking, satirical, or secular subjects to dwell on Scriptural truths. Thus Moore, expanding a passage from one of the psalms, beautifully sings :—

“Thou art, O God, the life and light  
Of all this wondrous world we see;  
Its glow by day, its smile by night  
Are but reflections caught from Thee.  
Where'er we turn, Thy glories shine,  
And all things fair and bright are Thine.”<sup>1</sup>

In like manner Byron, in his “Hebrew Melodies,” celebrates various themes drawn from the Old Testament. In “Saul” he describes the spectral visitation of the prophet Samuel;<sup>2</sup> in the “Vision of Belshazzar” he portrays the frightful apparition of a hand as it traced mysterious and ominous words on the palace wall;<sup>3</sup> in “By the Rivers of Babylon” he paraphrases a psalm of the captivity;<sup>4</sup> and in “The Destruction of Sennacherib” he versified an incident of Hebrew history in the well-known lines beginning :—

“The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,  
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;  
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,  
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee.”<sup>5</sup>

**Poets of Truth and Righteousness.**—It is hardly too much to claim that the great poets of the nineteenth century

<sup>1</sup> Compare Ps. 74 : 16, 17. See also Moore's paraphrase of Miriam's song in Ex. 15 : 20, 21.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. 28 : 7-25.

<sup>3</sup> Dan. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Ps. 137.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Kings, 18 and 19.

in England and America were, like the ancient Hebrew prophets, preachers of truth and righteousness. In the presence of a materialistic philosophy, which denied the high spiritual truths of God, and providence, and immortality, they steadfastly clung to the invisible and eternal. Wordsworth felt the mystery of that unseen Presence which pervades all things and which the psalmist of Israel had celebrated millenniums ago. In "Tintern Abbey" we read:—

" And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts : a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man ;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things."<sup>1</sup>

In the closing stanzas of "The Ancient Mariner" Coleridge declares the supremacy of love. This is the truth which Paul, in the famous thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, had eloquently proclaimed many centuries before. Here are the words of the English poet : —

" He prayeth best who loveth best  
All things both great and small ;  
For the dear God who loveth us,  
He made and loveth all."

One of the precious truths of the Scriptures is the fact of divine providence. It was repeatedly and beautifully presented by Jesus Christ. "The very hairs of your head," He said, "are numbered." Now listen to Robert Brown-

<sup>1</sup> Compare Ps. 139: 7-10.

ing's expansion of this conception of the divine love and care : —

“ God smiles as He has always smiled ;  
 Ere suns and moons could wax and wane,  
 Ere stars were thundergirt, or piled  
 The heavens, God thought on me His child ;  
 Ordained a life for me, arrayed  
 Its circumstances every one  
 To the minutest ; ay, God said  
 This head this hand should rest upon  
 Thus, ere He fashioned star or sun.” <sup>1</sup>

Nearly three thousand years ago David, “ the sweet singer of Israel,” celebrated the goodness of God.<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere in the Old Testament, as in the New, the same divine attribute is dwelt upon. In describing the divine nature John declares that “ God is love.” <sup>3</sup> Many of our modern poets have been inspired by the same exalted theme, and have found comfort and strength in its truth. Thus Whittier, as he thinks of death, gives admirable expression to his sense of trust : —

“ And so beside the Silent Sea  
 I wait the muffled oar ;  
 No harm from Him can come to me  
 On ocean or on shore.  
 “ I know not where His islands lift  
 Their fronded palms in air ;  
 I only know I cannot drift  
 Beyond His love and care.” <sup>4</sup>

An endless life beyond the gates of death — this is one of the great truths of Scripture. It is not clearly revealed in the Old Testament, but it is made prominent in the New. In comforting His disciples in view of His approach-

<sup>1</sup> Browning's “ Johannes Agricola in Meditation.”

<sup>2</sup> Ps 25.

<sup>4</sup> Whittier's “ The Eternal Goodness.”

<sup>3</sup> I John 4 : 16.

ing death, Jesus said to them in a passage of exquisite tenderness : " In my Father's house are many mansions : if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself ; that where I am, there ye may be also." <sup>1</sup> This has been the faith of Christendom for nearly two thousand years. In spite of the doubts which a materialistic philosophy and the critical spirit of the present age have sometimes started, the belief in immortality — a belief that confers infinite dignity upon mankind — is held to-day by our ablest thinkers and our noblest poets. Tennyson has convincingly voiced this belief in his " In Memoriam " : —

" Thou wilt not leave us in the dust :  
Thou madest man, he knows not why,  
He thinks he was not made to die ;  
And Thou hast made him : Thou art just."

In our sense of need and helplessness, the soul often cries out intuitively to the Invisible and Eternal. The Scriptures teach that human prayer is heard and answered. The great Teacher has given us a form of prayer, and encouraged us by the assurance that God is more willing than earthly parents to bestow good gifts upon His children.<sup>2</sup> This same truth finds expression in many of our modern singers, particularly in Tennyson, who in his " Passing of Arthur " declares : —

" More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,

<sup>1</sup> John 14 : 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 7 : 11.

If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
 Both for themselves and those that call them friend?  
 For so the whole round earth is every way  
 Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

**Architecture.** — The Scriptures have influenced art scarcely less than they have influenced literature. This is particularly true of the Middle Ages and the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Though the church is relatively less prominent to-day than during the periods just mentioned, the truths of the Bible are still a potent influence in the realm of art. Great cathedrals are still erected, and great paintings are still devoted to Scripture scenes.

Among the architectural wonders of Europe are the mighty mediæval cathedrals, which have been happily called "miracles in stone." They sprang from a deep religious spirit. Their fundamental plan represents the figure of the cross, on which the founder of Christianity was put to death; the nave, flanked with aisles, corresponds to the base of the cross, the transepts to the arms, and the choir to the top. This simple plan was subject to numberless modifications, which produced the variety to be seen to-day in those imposing mediæval structures.

**Ornamentation and Significance.** — The ornamentation of these cathedrals is as admirable as it is astonishing. In the hands of the mediæval masons stone seems as plastic as wood or clay. Foliage forms abound in the minor ornaments; and entire façades, as in the cathedrals of Notre Dame, Westminster, and York, are wrought into forms of elaborate beauty. Statues of saints abound; and the most striking incidents of the Old and New Testaments are frequently portrayed in bas-relief. The walls are generally adorned with Scriptural frescoes; and from the tall windows flame in beautiful colors the charac-

ters and scenes of sacred history. In all the large towns and cities these massive piles of speaking stone, towering above the surrounding buildings and looking far away into the country, remind the toiling population of the preëminent claims of spiritual things.

**Painting.** — For a thousand years — throughout the Middle Ages and longer — painting was the servant of religion. It subserved a twofold purpose : first, it was used to decorate cathedrals and other ecclesiastical buildings ; and second, it was employed to teach biblical and theological truths. As we run over the history of painting, it is astonishing to note the preponderance of religious motive through many centuries. There is scarcely any historic scene of importance in either the Old or the New Testament that has not been portrayed on cathedral walls or made to flame from cathedral windows.

With the Renaissance of the fifteenth century, painting started upon a new era of development. Since that time almost every country in Europe has had its world-famed artists. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries Italy had Raphael, Michael Angelo, Titian, Correggio, Andrea del Sarto, Paul Veronese ; Germany, Wolgemut, Dürer, Cranach, Holbein ; France, Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain ; Spain, Murillo and Velasquez ; Flanders, Rubens and Van Dyck ; and Holland, Rembrandt. All these artists employed their extraordinary gifts, to a greater or less degree, in illustrating biblical scenes.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Among the noteworthy paintings by these artists may be mentioned Raphael's "Transfiguration" and "Sistine Madonna"; Michael Angelo's "Last Judgment"; Titian's "Scourging of Christ"; Andrea del Sarto's "Abraham offering Isaac"; Paul Veronese's "Adoration of the Wise Men"; Dürer's "Descent from the Cross"; Murillo's "Thirsting Israelites in the Desert"; Poussin's "Adoration of the Magi," and "Rebecca and Eliezer"; Rubens' "Presentation in the Temple," and "Descent from the Cross"; and Van Dyck's "Christ on the Cross."



Though art has naturally shared in the expanding knowledge of the nineteenth century, and has immeasurably enlarged the scope of its work, great painters of recent years have not disdained to exercise their genius upon Scripture themes. Many will recall Munkacsy's "Christ before Pilate," which was exhibited in different parts of the world. The same artist's "Christ on Calvary" is likewise a masterful production. The American painters, Charles Sprague Pearce and Frank V. du Mond, have wrought in the same field; and the former's "Annunciation" and the latter's "Christ and the Fishermen" are worthy of mention. To these admirable productions might be added Leroy's "Christ healing the Blind," Uhde's "The Announcement to the Shepherds," and Julius Schmid's "Suffer Little Children to come unto Me," and many others.

**Ethical Ideals.** — The high ethical ideals of the present day are directly or indirectly traceable to the teachings of the Bible. The Scriptures declare that our lives, lifted above the insignificance of a brief material existence, are brought into immediate and imperishable relations with the Governor of the universe. The Old Testament enthrones Jehovah as a God of righteousness, who demands the same moral integrity of man. This fellowship in righteousness is the law of divine harmony. In Leviticus the Lord is represented as saying to the Hebrews whom He has delivered from the bondage of Egypt: "Ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."<sup>1</sup> This same principle is inculcated again and again in the Scriptures.

The type of character thus demanded of us embodies every virtue and excludes every vice. Jesus distinctly set up this ideal when He said, "Be ye therefore perfect, even

<sup>1</sup> Lev. II: 45.

as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”<sup>1</sup> The duties and prohibitions involved in the biblical conception of what human life should be are summarily set forth in the Ten Commandments; they are declared with still greater clearness and fulness in the Sermon on the Mount; last of all, they are exemplified in the purity, truth, and love of the great Master Himself. Christ is the incarnation of the highest manhood — the realized ideal of the human race.

**Philanthropic Movements.** — Through the propaganda of the pulpit and the press, this noble Christian ideal has made its way into the hearts and lives of men. Though it may not at present be fully adopted as a working principle, it has the respect and confidence of all right-thinking people. In an increasing degree, it is coming to dominate the personal and social life of Christendom. If at any time it is temporarily obscured by the spirit of greed, it sooner or later asserts itself with renewed vigor.

The Christian ideal of life has awakened a strong sense of social obligation. Relentless war is being made upon every evil that tends to degrade or disorganize social life. It is a noteworthy fact that the most powerful temperance organization to-day calls itself the Woman's *Christian* Temperance Union. Men of wealth are feeling more and more the obligation of stewardship. Never before were there such munificent gifts for education, libraries, and missions. Institutions for the care of the helpless and the needy — orphan homes, hospitals for the insane, schools for the deaf and blind — are multiplied on every hand. Every city has its charitable organizations for helping the poor. And any widespread calamity, like the distress of pestilence or the destruction of earthquake, calls forth a magnificent display of unselfish munificence.

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 2:48.

**Hopefulness for the Future.**—The teachings of the Bible have begotten a hopeful outlook for the future. It is assumed throughout the Scriptures, as it is declared in Revelation, “the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”<sup>1</sup> The sacred writers recognize a forward movement in humanity, — “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.”<sup>2</sup> The national turnings and overturnings narrated in the Old Testament are presented as preparatory to the nobler Christian era. “When the fulness of time was come,” says Paul, “God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”<sup>3</sup>

Jesus expected His gospel gradually to make its way among men, and ultimately gain general acceptance. He compared His work in founding the kingdom of heaven to a grain of mustard seed, which afterwards grew into a wide-spreading tree; and also to “leaven which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.”<sup>4</sup> The prophet Isaiah looked forward to a time of peace among all peoples. “They shall beat their swords into ploughshares,” he predicted, “and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.”<sup>5</sup> Moved by the same uplifting thought of universal peace, Tennyson sang in well-known lines of a time, —

“When the war-drum throbs no longer, and the battle-flags  
are furled

In the parliament of man, the federation of the world.”

What our seers and poets, with a divine hopefulness, have thus dreamed of, seems to have the beginning of its fulfilment in the Peace Conference of the Hague.

<sup>1</sup> Rev. 19: 6.    <sup>2</sup> Mark 4: 28.    <sup>3</sup> Gal. 4: 4, 5.    <sup>4</sup> Matt. 13: 33.    <sup>5</sup> Is. 2: 4.

**Conclusion.** — The relation of the Bible to modern life is thus seen to be all-pervading. It has moulded our ways of thinking; it has supplied our fundamental views of the world; it has developed our institutions; it has inspired our movements of reform; it has exalted us with its noble ideals, and cheered us with its bright hopes of the future. No one can enter into the spirit of the modern world or understand its deep ethical movements without an acquaintance with the Scriptures. The utility of a knowledge of Greek and Roman history and literature is generally recognized; but a fair consideration of the matter shows that an acquaintance with the facts and truths of Scripture is of still higher importance. It may be justly claimed that such a knowledge, by far too much neglected at the present time, is an indispensable element of liberal culture.

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#### RESEARCH WORK

The students should carefully look up the following passages, which may be made the basis of comment and discussion by the teacher. Many of these passages will show that the Bible still has a message for our age.

The origin of the world, Gen. 1:1; Neh. 9:6; Ps. 33:6; Is. 42:5; Heb. 3:4; Rom. 11:36.

The biblical view of man's origin, Gen. 1:26-29; 2:7; Mal. 2:10; Acts 17:24-29.

The right use of our talents, Matt. 25:14-30; Lu. 19:12-27.

Marriage, Gen. 2:18; Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12.

Bondmen or slaves, Ex. 21:2-6; Lev. 25:39-46; Deut. 15:12-19; Philemon.

Ill-gotten and ill-used riches, Jer. 17:11; Mic. 2:1-3; Lu. 12:13-21; Jas. 5:1-6.

Commercial and social relations, Lev. 19:35, 36; Deut. 25:13-16; Is. 1:13-17; Matt. 7:12; 22:37-40; Lu. 11:37-44.

The omniscience and omnipresence of God, Ps. 139: 1-12.

The nature and supremacy of love, 1 Cor. 13; 1 John 3: 14-24.

Divine providence, Ps. 34; Matt. 6: 25-34; 10: 28-31.

Immortality, John 14: 1-3; 1 Cor. 15: 53-58; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8.

Prayer, Matt. 6: 5-15; 7: 7-11; Lu. 18: 1-8; Jas. 5: 14-18.

Ethical conduct and ideals, Ex. 20: 2-17; Matt. 5: 2-16; Gal. 5: 14-26;

Eph. 5: 1-18.

The goal of national changes, Dan. 2: 19-45; Rev. 21: 1-27.

## CHAPTER II

### BACKGROUND OF HEBREW HISTORY

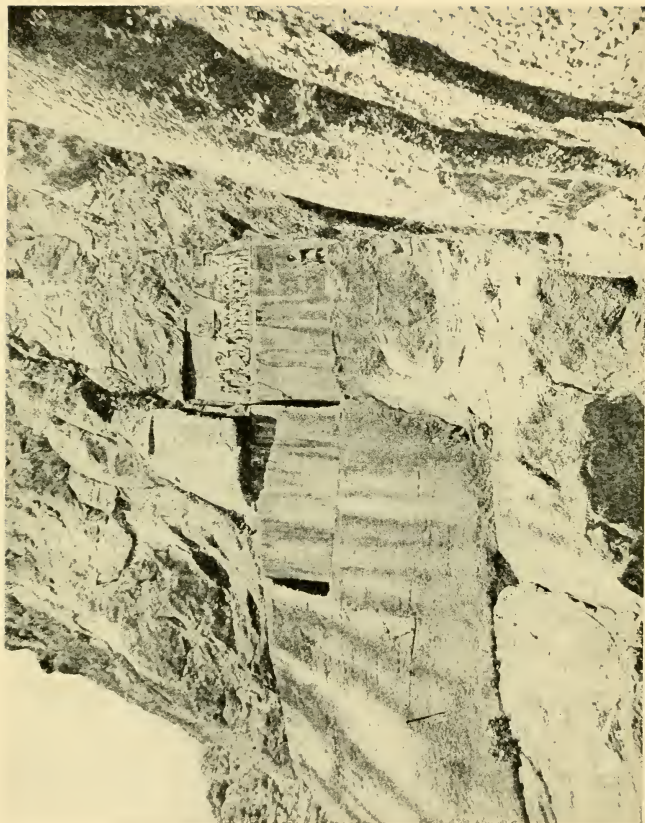
**New Sources of Information.** — Until a few decades ago the Bible contained the oldest trustworthy records of ancient history. In recent years new and numerous sources of information have been brought to light; and we are now acquainted with great world-empires that form a vast background for Hebrew history. The people of Israel are antedated by the empires of Mesopotamia and Egypt by thousands of years. Before Moses led his people from Egyptian bondage or Abraham had left the city of Ur in Chaldea, a high degree of civilization existed on the banks of the Nile and the Euphrates. We cannot fully understand the history and the literature of the Hebrew people without a knowledge of these anterior nations, with whom at times the Hebrews stood in close political and commercial relations, and whose culture they inherited and in some particulars developed.<sup>1</sup>

**Explorers and Excavators.** — For these new and invaluable sources of information we are indebted to the labors of enthusiastic explorers and excavators. The French-

<sup>1</sup> "In the age to which the migration of Terah belonged, Canaan and Babylonia were in connection one with the other. Babylonian kings claimed rule over Canaan, and Canaanitish merchants were established in Babylonia. The language of Canaan was heard in the Babylonian cities, and even the rulers of the land were of foreign blood. Between Babylonia and Canaan there was a highway which had been trodden for generations, and along which soldiers and civil officials, merchants, and messengers, passed frequently to and fro." — A. H. SAYCE, "Early History of the Hebrews," p. 134.







THE BEHISTUN ROCK

man Botta in 1842 and the Englishman Layard in 1845 opened the way with excavations at Khorsabad and Nimrud, which brought to light long-buried records and monuments of Assyrian civilization. A new interest in archaeological research was awakened in Europe and America. Many other explorers—Rawlinson, George Smith, De Sarsec, Peters, Hilprecht—were despatched to the Orient, whose excavations at Nippur, Babylon, Nineveh, and elsewhere have uncovered buried temples and palaces, and restored to the world great libraries founded by enlightened monarchs. Explorers have been no less active and successful in Egypt. As a result of these investigations, we are able, in large measure, to reproduce the wonderful historic drama that for thousands of years before our era was enacted on the plains of Mesopotamia and Egypt.

**The Behistun Inscription.**—The key to the language of Babylonia and Assyria was furnished by the Behistun inscription which, about 515 B.C., was cut on the polished surface of a limestone cliff in the Zagros Mountains by Darius, King of Persia. This inscription, which contains a laudatory account of the king's numerous conquests, was copied by Henry C. Rawlinson in 1835. When his laborious and dangerous task was finished, he found that he had not one but three languages in his possession. After years of study, he succeeded in translating the five columns—nearly 400 lines—of the old Persian writing.

The Median and Babylonian inscriptions were forced later to yield up their secrets. And to-day Assyriologists in Europe and America, developing the work thus begun, are busy deciphering the small clay tablets of cuneiform writing which have been dug up from the ruins of buried and sometimes forgotten cities. The literary and his-

toric treasures already translated into English fill many volumes.

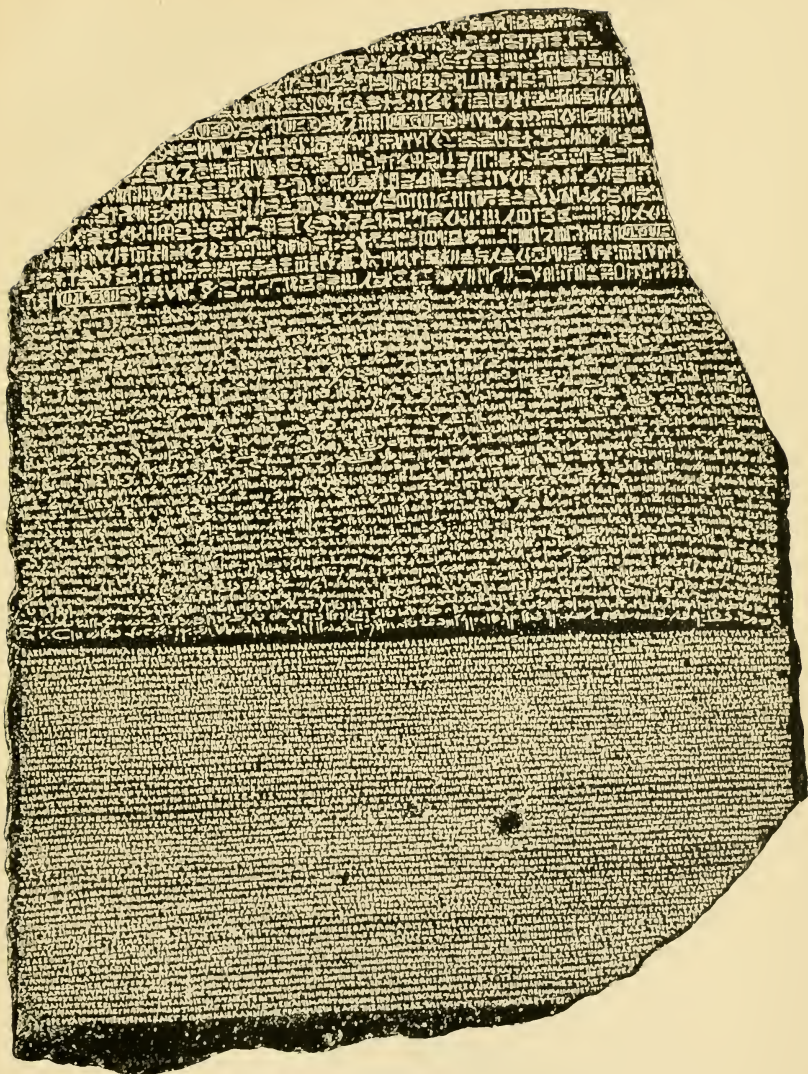
**The Rosetta Stone.** — What the Behistun inscription did for the language of Babylonia was accomplished by the Rosetta stone for the language of Egypt. Unlike the wedge-shaped characters of Mesopotamia, the writing of Egypt was hieroglyphic. At first the hieroglyphs consisted of pictures of objects; but at a later time they acquired, to some extent, a phonetic or syllabic force. A simplified form of this writing, which was current among the people, is known as demotic.

The means of solving the mystery of this writing, which had remained unread for more than 2000 years, was furnished by the famous Rosetta stone, which was discovered in 1799 during Napoleon's expedition into Egypt. This stone, now an object of interest in the British Museum, contains a trilingual inscription, the first part of which is in hieroglyphics, the second in demotic characters, and the last in uncial Greek. The Greek was easily read; and finally, through the labors of Dr. Young, of England, and Champollion, of France, the enigma of Egyptian writing was solved, and the ancient records, which covered the monuments and temple walls of that country, were opened to the world.

## I. MESOPOTAMIA

**Mesopotamian Region.** — Though etymologically restricted to the plain lying between the Tigris and the Euphrates, the word Mesopotamia is loosely used to designate the entire region that stretches from the Zagros mountains on the east to the Syrian mountains on the west. On the north it is bounded by the mountains of Armenia and on the south by the deserts of Arabia. This





THE ROSETTA STONE



extended region — the principal scene of the world's history for thousands of years — is drained by two great rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris, which rise among the snow-capped mountains of Armenia. Though now a desolate and arid region, the home of Arabian nomads, it once blossomed as "the garden of the Lord."

Its natural fertility was increased by a vast system of irrigation, which carried the fruitful waters of the Euphrates and the Tigris to distant parts of the lowland plains. Traces of the great irrigating canals, some of which are named in the Scriptures, are still discernible, while the lofty mounds, which rise in every direction and conceal the ruins of once splendid temples and palaces, bear melancholy testimony to the former wealth and grandeur of the country.

In the southeast lay the district of Chaldea; farther to the north was Babylonia; and northeast of the Tigris stretched Assyria. To the east of these districts, each of which was successively the seat of a monarchy, lay Elam, Media, and Persia. All these countries were more or less intimately associated with Hebrew history.

**Chaldea.** — The southeastern part of the Mesopotamian region, called in Genesis "the land of Shinar," was probably the cradle of human civilization. Though the beginnings are lost in the darkness of antiquity, authentic records, as carved on palace and temple walls, take us back some five or six thousand years before the Christian era. In the tenth chapter of Genesis, with its remarkable ethnological traditions, Nimrod is made the founder of "Babylon, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar"; and the language of the inscriptions in the most ancient parts of the ruins shows that the original occupants of the territory were not of Semitic origin.



**Various Dynasties.**—The earliest glimpses we get of Chaldean history, as derived from explorations, reveal to us the rivalries of neighboring cities and petty kings. A parallel is found in the condition of Canaan at the time of the Israelitish invasion. The tablets and monuments recently exhumed at Telloh, Nippur, and Mugheir acquaint us with various dynasties that had their capitals in these and adjacent cities. Sargon I. (about 3800 B.C.) was a great conqueror, and ultimately extended his empire from Elam to the Mediterranean. He had a worthy successor in his son Naram-Sin, who in the proud consciousness of his power assumed the title of “king of the four quarters of the world.”

The city of Ur, called in Genesis “Ur of the Chaldees” and interesting as the birthplace of Abraham, was at intervals the centre of three dynasties.<sup>1</sup> Ur-gur, whose reign is placed 3200 B.C.,—a thousand years or more before the migration of Abraham to Canaan,—was famous as a builder of temples, among which was a pyramidal structure at Nippur.

**Hammurabi** (2250 B.C.).—In the fourteenth chapter of Genesis there is a brief account of a war between four kings of the east with five kings of the west. It was not the first time, as we have seen, that monarchs of lower Mesopotamia had extended their arms toward the Mediterranean. The most important of these allied invading kings was “Amraphel, King of Shinar,” who has been identified with Hammurabi. He reigned at Babylon

<sup>1</sup> “Great as is the place which Babylon has occupied in the world's history beyond all the cities in the land of Shinar, its glory in those far-back times was eclipsed by the famous city of Ur. Its very name, signifying city, marks its pre-eminence. It was a great emporium of trade: the ships of Ur brought the products of southern Arabia to Babylonia, and, it may be, even traded with the land of Egypt.”—THOMAS NICOL, “Recent Archæology and the Bible,” p. 112.

about 2250 B.C.; and his martial prowess extended his dominion in all directions.

**Code of Laws.** — Hammurabi was not only a victorious warrior, but also a beneficent ruler. His code of laws, discovered at Susa in 1902, throws an interesting light on the social conditions of Chaldea in the age of Abraham, the progenitor of the Hebrew people. It is inscribed on a pillar of black diorite nearly eight feet high.

The prologue to the code reveals the upright spirit in which Hammurabi wished to rule. He recognized a divine call "to cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked, and the evil, to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak, to enlighten the land, and to further the welfare of the people." This code, which consists of two hundred and eighty-two paragraphs, shows an elaborate social organization. Besides miscellaneous laws, it contains sections relating to the treatment of slaves, to leasing and tillage, the management of irrigating canals, commercial transactions, and divorce and inheritance. Throughout the code the sense of responsibility and justice is made very prominent. The general character of the code makes good the king's claim that he desired to be "like a father to his subjects."

**The Assyrian Monarchy.** — As stated in the tenth chapter of Genesis, Assyria was first colonized by emigrants from Babylon. When the migration took place, it is impossible to say, but the city of Nineveh was already in existence 3000 B.C. The relations existing between Assyria and the mother-country were always intimate. Their language and culture were substantially the same; and for the greater part of their history, they were politically united. At first Assyria was naturally a dependency; but it gradually grew in population and political

power, and about 1290 B.C. its king, Tukulti-Ninib I., invaded Chaldea, captured Babylon, and reduced that early and powerful monarchy to a tributary relation.

The capitals of Assyria were at different times Asshur, Calah, and Nineveh, all of which were adorned with magnificent temples and palaces. In the Old Testament Nineveh is described as "an exceeding great city of three days' journey."<sup>1</sup> We have a tolerably complete list of Assyrian kings from about 1800 B.C. to the fall of the empire in 606 B.C., and ample means to recognize the high state of civilization to which the empire attained.

**Tiglathpilezer I.** (1120 B.C.).—One of the most vigorous of Assyrian monarchs was Tiglathpilezer I., who reigned about 1120 B.C. He extended his empire abroad, and as a wise ruler developed its strength at home. He carried on many campaigns of conquest. In one great battle on the confines of Asia Minor he is said to have defeated twenty-five kings.

On a prism found at Calah Tiglathpilezer I. proudly enumerates his conquests. "In all," he says, "forty-two countries and their kings from the Lower Zab and the border of the distant mountains to beyond the Euphrates and to the land of the Hittites and the Upper Sea of the setting sun [Black Sea], from the beginning of my sovereignty until my fifth year my hand has conquered." It is thus seen that he fixed the wide limits of the Assyrian empire about the time the judges were ruling in Israel.

**Later History.**—From the ninth century before our era the western campaigns of Assyrian conquerors, who came in contact with Israel and Judah, are frequently mentioned in the second book of Kings. Asshurnazirpal III. (885–867 B.C.), who carried his victorious arms

<sup>1</sup> Jonah 3: 3.

in all directions, conquered Tyre and Sidon in Phœnicia, and probably overran Palestine. He was vindictive and cruel; and in describing the capture of Bit-Uru, he affords us a glimpse of the barbarities frequently practised in war in those distant ages. "My warriors," he says, "fell upon the city like vultures. I took the citadel, put eight hundred men to the sword, and cut off their heads. I made a mound with their corpses before the city gate; the prisoners were beheaded, and I put seven hundred of them to the cross. The city was pillaged and destroyed; I transformed it into a heap of ruins."

**Conquest of Israel.**—His successor, Shalmaneser II. (858–824 B.C.), compelled Jehu, King of Israel, to pay tribute. On a black obelisk containing the story of Shalmaneser's wars, the payment of this tribute is depicted in an interesting bas-relief. Tiglathpilezer III. (745–727 B.C.) received tribute from Menahem, King of Israel, and later from Ahaz, King of Judah, whom he supported against a hostile alliance of northern Syria. A few years later Hoshea, King of Israel, who had formed an alliance with Shabak of Egypt, refused further tribute to Assyria. Accordingly his territory was invaded by a formidable army. After a siege of three years Samaria was captured by Sargon II. (722–705 B.C.), who, according to a common custom, "carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor, on the river Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes."<sup>1</sup> The captives were replaced in the land of Israel by settlers from the eastern part of the Assyrian empire.

**Sennacherib** (705–681 B.C.).—The empire of Assyria was now at the zenith of its power. Sennacherib, the son of Sargon II., was a great builder and great warrior. His

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings 17: 6.

palace at Nineveh is, perhaps, the most magnificent of Assyrian ruins. He subdued Babylon, carried on a triumphant campaign in Phœnicia and Syria, and was prevented from overcoming Hezekiah, whom he "had shut up like a caged bird within Jerusalem," only by a sudden pestilence that swept away 185,000 of his army.<sup>1</sup>

But, if we may trust Sennacherib's own account, his expedition against Judah was by no means so disastrous as might be inferred from the Hebrew chronicle. It will be noted that he omits all mention of the disaster at Jerusalem. "I then besieged Hezekiah of Judah," he says, "who had not submitted to my yoke, and I captured forty-six of his strong cities and fortresses and innumerable small cities which were round about them, with the battering of rams and the assault of engines, and the attack of foot-soldiers, and by mines and breaches made in the walls. I brought out therefrom 200,150 people."

**Fall of Assyria (606 B.C.).** — The end, however, was not long delayed. Cruelty, pride, luxury — these were the vices of that warlike people which prepared the way for their overthrow. In alliance with Nabopolassar, King of Babylon, the Scythians and Medes invaded Assyria and laid siege to Nineveh. When hard pressed and hopeless, the Assyrian king, Sin-shar-ishkum, set fire to his palace and perished in the flames. The city fell 606 B.C. From this disaster the empire of Assyria never recovered; and henceforth that great power, which had dominated western Asia for centuries, was lost in the movements of still mightier nations.

In this destruction was fulfilled the remarkable prediction of the Hebrew prophet Zephaniah a few years before. "The Lord," he said, "will stretch out His hand

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings 19 : 35, 36.



against the north, and destroy Assyria; and will make Nineveh a desolation, and dry like a wilderness. And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, all the beasts of the nations; both the cormorant and the bittern shall lodge in the upper lintels of it; their voice shall sing in the windows; desolation shall be in the thresholds; for He shall uncover the cedar work. This is the rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none beside me; how is she become a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in! every one that passeth by her shall hiss, and wag his hand.”<sup>1</sup>

**Renaissance of Babylon.** — With the destruction of Nineveh and the overthrow of the Assyrian empire, Babylon once more became the dominant power of the Tigris-Euphrates plain. Nabopolassar, who had taken part in the campaign against Nineveh, was succeeded by Nebuchadnezzar (605–562 B.C.), whose long reign was the most splendid period of the new but short-lived monarchy. A picture of his grandeur is given in the opening chapters of the book of Daniel.

Nebuchadnezzar made numerous military campaigns, in one of which he subdued the whole of Syria. Not long afterwards Zedekiah, King of Judah, backed by an alliance with Egypt, rebelled. Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians 587 B.C., and all the people, except such laborers as were absolutely necessary for the cultivation of the soil, were deported to Babylon. A detailed account of the event is given in the last chapter of 2 Kings; and in the 137th Psalm there is a pathetic picture of the Hebrew captives in their foreign home:—

“By the rivers of Babylon  
There we sat down, yea, we wept,  
When we remembered Zion.”

<sup>1</sup> Zeph. 2 : 13–15.



At this time Babylon, with its towering, many-colored temples, its sculptured palaces, its verdant hanging gardens, and its lofty castellated walls, was the most splendid city of the world.

**Fall of Babylon** (538 B.C.). — The successors of Nebuchadnezzar did not partake of his greatness. Of Amil-Marduk, known in the Old Testament as Evil-Merodach, but few records have descended to us. A pleasing glimpse of him is given in the closing verses of the second book of Kings, where his humane treatment of Jehoiachim, King of Judah, is particularly mentioned.

The last king of Babylon was Nabonidus (555–538 B.C.), who was distinguished for his interest in the archæology of his country. Unfortunately his interest in its early records led him to neglect its welfare during his own reign. It is particularly charged that he let the fortifications of Babylon fall into ruin, and that he neglected the worship of Marduk. A deep dissatisfaction laid hold of the people. As a result, when Cyrus, King of the Persians, invaded the country, he was received into Babylon without a struggle. This event, which occurred 538 B.C., reduced Babylonia to a province of the Persian empire.

Belshazzar, whose impious feast is the subject of the fifth chapter of Daniel, appears from several inscriptions and tablets to have been the son of Nabonidus, the last king of Babylon. As prince regent or as heir to the throne, he may have been properly called by the author of Daniel "King of the Chaldeans." The Darius mentioned as the victor and governor of Babylon was probably a general or viceroy of Cyrus.

**Civilization.** — Though three monarchies, as we have seen, successively occupied the Mesopotamian region, there was but one civilization. The Babylonians and As-

syrians were of Semitic origin. The Semitic peoples are highly endowed; and whether Babylonian, Hebrew, or Arab, they are characterized by a glowing imagination, quick invention, and restless impatience of control. Whether in discourse or in architecture, they conceive beautiful forms. The civilization of Babylonia and Assyria, at which we marvel to-day, was a product of Semitic genius.

The form of government, as in all Oriental countries, was an absolute monarchy. The will of the sovereign was law. As despotism depends ultimately on physical force, the monarchies of Mesopotamia rested on a military basis. While many of the sovereigns were humane and devoted to the welfare of their realm, the majority, perhaps, were chiefly concerned with their own pleasure and glory. They were often ambitious, tyrannical, and cruel.

**Science.** — Babylonia may be regarded as the original home of astronomy, which was associated with the rites of religion and the superstitions of astrology. Observatories, which were built in connection with the temples, existed in all the principal cities. The signs of the zodiac were marked out, maps of the stars were made, and eclipses were recorded. The year was divided into twelve lunar months. The week consisted of seven days, and included a day of rest, like the Hebrew Sabbath, in which ordinary occupations were suspended. The mathematical sciences reached an astonishing development. A tablet found at Larsa contains a table of squares and cubes from one to sixty; and the plot of an estate lying outside the walls of Babylon shows that the art of surveying was understood.

**Architecture.** — The architecture of Babylonia and Assyria was determined in large measure by the character of the building materials at hand. As there were no stone

quarries in the wide alluvial plains, the people were forced to the use of bricks, which were either dried in the sun or burned in kilns.

The temples and palaces were built on immense platforms from twenty to forty feet high. The palaces, which often covered several acres of ground, consisted of narrow halls and large open courts. But little use was made of the arch and column. At the principal entrances to the halls stood colossal winged bulls or lions with human heads, -- figures that seem to have symbolized the swiftness, strength, and intelligence of the national character.

The interior of the halls was decorated with elaborate panels from nine to twelve feet high, which were covered with inscriptions and bas-relief sculptures representing martial events, hunting scenes, or mythological characters. The space above this sculptured wainscoting, together with the entire ceiling, was decorated with paintings, gildings, and richly carved mouldings, the whole resulting in impressive splendor.

**Sculpture.** — The Babylonians and Assyrians excelled in sculpture. Whether carving seals or gigantic symbolic figures, they exhibited an admirable skill. We find at once freedom of conception and carefulness of execution. The dignity, strength, and conscious power of their human-headed bulls witness to high artistic gifts. The Babylonian sculptor was not hampered, as was the Egyptian artist, by a rigid conventionalism. He understood anatomy and studied the forms of nature; and as a result, there is often a surprising realism in his portrayal of animals and the human form. Through his fidelity to life we are made acquainted with the physiognomy, the dress, and the customs of Babylonia and Assyria thousands of years ago.

**Manufacture.** — The Babylonians excelled likewise in the manufacture of textile fabrics of linen, wool, and cotton. They were renowned for the superior fineness and brilliant colors of their garments. It is a significant fact that in the conquest of Canaan under Joshua in the fifteenth century before Christ, Achan fell into a mortal trespass through the alluring beauty of "a goodly Babylonish garment."<sup>1</sup> Delicate perfumes, rich carpets, and precious stones of various kinds ministered to the luxury of domestic and social life at home, and furnished the materials of commerce, which was carried on, by land and sea, with the rest of the world. The description of Belshazzar's feast in the fifth chapter of Daniel gives us a glimpse of the voluptuous customs of Babylon at the period of its fall.

**Religion.** — The religion of Babylonia and Assyria was a complicated polytheism. At the head of the celestial hierarchy was a triad of major deities called Ilu or Ana, Bel or Baal, and Anu. There was also a second triad associated with the visible world; namely, Shamash, god of the sun, Sin, god of the moon, and Bin, Ramman, or Abad, god of the higher regions of the atmosphere. A series of divinities presided over the planets: Adar over Saturn, Marduk over Jupiter, Nergal over Mars, Ishtar over Venus, and Nabu over Mercury. Each city had its tutelary deity, and vied with its neighbors in the erection of imposing temples. Bel was worshipped at Nippur, Shamash in Larsa, and Marduk in Babylon.

Though the religious rites of the Babylonians and Assyrians contained licentious and degrading elements, the people were not lacking in piety. In addition to the solemn pomp of great annual festivals, the priests offered in the temples daily sacrifices, which usually consisted of a ram

<sup>1</sup> Josh. 7 : 21.

or kid. The people recognized the operation of a divine providence in human life; and while they practised magical arts and believed in the superstitions of astrology, they often showed in their hymns and prayers a marked degree of religious fervor. Some of their hymns, in sentiment and expression, are comparable to the Psalms.

**Tradition of Creation.** — Among the literary remains of Babylonia is a remarkable tradition of creation, which has points of striking resemblance with the narrative of Genesis. It is preserved in a series of tablets, most of which have been translated. The record of the first tablet describes a chaotic condition of the world. "There was a time," so reads the tablet, "when what is overhead was not called heaven, and what is beneath was not yet called earth." Afterwards, as other tablets record, the gods "created the living creatures, the cattle of the field, the wild beasts of the field, and creeping things."

Along with the points of resemblance between the Babylonian and the Hebrew account of creation, there is one fundamental difference. While the Babylonian tradition is frankly polytheistic, the biblical narrative rises to a monotheistic conception of God. Whether both narratives sprang from a common source, or whether the record in Genesis is drawn from the Babylonian tradition, the Scriptural account bears the impress of an insight or inspiration that lifts it far above the story of the cuneiform tablets.<sup>1</sup>

**The Deluge.** — The Babylonian account of the deluge is a still more notable tradition. It is contained in the

<sup>1</sup> "The early traditions of the Semitic race were yoked to the service of the spiritual religion of Israel. The essential teaching of Jehovah respecting the Divine nature, the universe, and man's nature, was conveyed in the outline of a cosmogony, which, if it had its roots in the early Assyrian traditions, was finally expressed in all the dignified simplicity of Hebrew monotheism."—H. E. RYLE, "Early Narratives of Genesis," p. 23.



Babylonian epic of Gilgamish, which was first discovered and translated by George Smith, of the British Museum, in 1872. It has points of remarkable agreement with the story of the deluge in Genesis. Sit-Napishtim, the Babylonian Noah, built a ship; then, in anticipation of the flood foretold by the gods, he says: "With everything that I had of the seed of life I filled it. I embarked with my whole family, my servants, the cattle of the field, the wild beasts of the field, and the workmen, all of them I embarked."

Then followed a violent storm of rain so that "the gods crouched down like dogs." "Six days and seven nights," says the narrator, "the storm raged, the flood, and tempest. . . . I looked out over the sea, crying aloud, but all mankind had turned to earth again. . . . The seventh day at dawn I sent out a dove; she left, she flew hither and thither, there being no lighting place she returned. . . . Then I sent out a raven and let her go. The raven flew off and saw the diminishing waters; she came near and croaked, but did not return." These incidents will be recognized as remarkably like the narrative in Genesis. But here, again, the biblical story is exalted by its deep moral purpose and its monotheistic idea of God.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. EGYPT

**Introductory.** — The northeastern part of Africa, known as Egypt, occupies a very prominent place in the ancient world. Its people, who probably migrated from Asia in

<sup>1</sup> "The narrative of the flood records to us some terrible but local cataclysm which overtook the original seat of the Semitic race. The Hebrew and Assyro-Babylonian accounts are two parallel versions of it, transmitted, by the two strangely different branches of that stock, in literature so varied as the clay tablets of Nineveh and the Scriptures of the Jews." — H. E. RYLE, "Early Narratives of Genesis," p. 113.



prehistoric times, belonged, as the sculptures of ancient temples and tombs clearly show, to the white race. For a long time the civilization of Egypt was thought to be the oldest in the world ; but, as we have already learned, that of the Mesopotamian region probably antedated it by some centuries. A conservative estimate places the beginning of the first dynasty at 4400 B.C., — more than 2000 years before Abraham left Ur of the Chaldees to become founder of the Hebrew people.

**The Nile.** — As Herodotus long ago observed, Egypt is the gift of the Nile. But for this mighty river, that country, famous in ancient as in modern times for its fertility, would form a part of the great Sahara Desert. The Nile, whose sources remained for ages a mystery, takes its rise in equatorial Africa. The heavy rainfall of that tropical region and the melting of the mountain snows of Abyssinia, cause a yearly overflow, which makes portions of the valley like a sea. The numerous towns and cities, as the Greek historian remarked, rise above the waters like beautiful islands. This annual inundation, which begins about the first of July, covers the river plain with a dark muddy sediment, which renews the fertility of the soil.

**Physical Features.** — Egypt extends from the first cataract of the Nile to the Mediterranean Sea — a distance of about 570 miles. The fertile portion of the valley has a width varying from five to twenty miles. As the river approaches the sea, it divides into two main branches which form a wide triangular plain known as the Delta. On the west the Nile valley is, in a measure, protected against the encroachments of the desert by a range of hills ; on the east it is bounded by a range of mountains, which separate it from the sea. The fertile portion of this valley, embracing about 12,000 square miles, became

in very ancient times the centre of a dense population, which, largely cut off from contact with other nations, developed a peculiar literature, religion, and art.

**Influence of the River.** — The Nile may be regarded as the controlling factor in Egyptian civilization. It not only created the fertile valley, but it also determined, in large measure, the pursuits and intellectual development of the people. The fertility of the soil, annually enriched by the overflow of the river, invited to agriculture, in which wheat, millet, barley, and rice rewarded the husbandman a hundred fold for his industry. The need of irrigation developed a mechanical ingenuity; and the repeated effacements of landmarks made mensuration a necessity.

The growing population led to the building of cities and the enactment of laws for the maintenance of social order. Even the deep religious sense of the people, which in the course of time created an all-powerful priesthood, may be traced, in some measure at least, to the beneficence of the river. In its annual overflow, without which the country was in danger of desolation by famine, the people learned their dependence upon a higher power than their own.

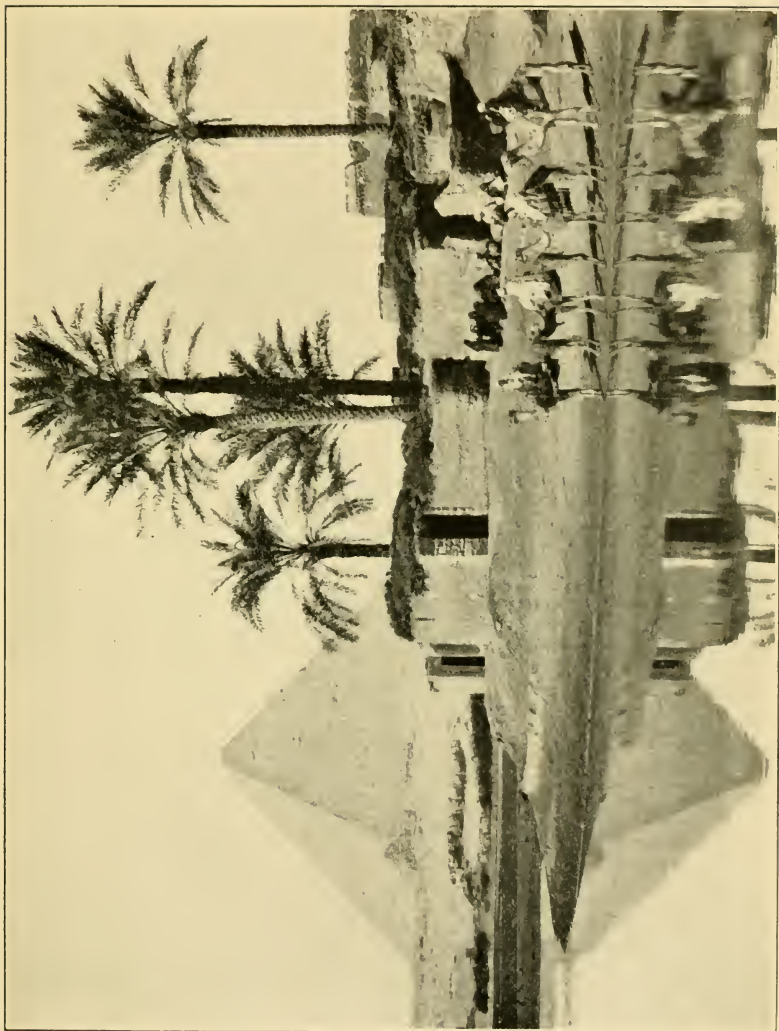
**Different Classes.** — The Egyptians were divided into several well-defined classes or castes. The priests, who constituted the highest caste, possessed immense wealth and influence. They were supported by the state, and held one-third of the land free of tax. They were the chief representatives of learning, and the intellectual leaders of the people. The king was regarded as a high priest, whose absolute power rested on his character as representative of the gods. The military class ranked next to the priests. The rest of the population was divided into three general classes, of which the first included the farmers and boatmen; the second, the mechanics and tradesmen;

and the third, the herdsmen, fishermen, and common laborers.

**Old Memphis Empire.** — The history of Egypt before the conquest of Alexander the Great, 332 B.C., includes three empires, — the old Memphis empire (4700–2700 B.C.), the old Theban or Middle empire (2700–1635 B.C.), and the new Theban empire (1635–332 B.C.). Ten dynasties belong to the long period of the old Memphitic empire. Many of the sovereigns of this remote empire have left monuments of various kinds, which throw much light on the state of society. For example, Zeser (3866 B.C.), a king of the third dynasty, built the step pyramid of Saqqarah, of which it has been said that “it is certainly the oldest of all the large buildings which have successfully resisted the action of wind and weather, and destruction by the hand of man.” The great Sphinx of Gizeh, which was sculptured at this period, exhibits the high degree of intelligence and artistic skill to which the Egyptians had attained. Khufu, or Cheops (3733 B.C.), built the great pyramid that bears his name.

**The Middle Empire.** — The Middle or old Theban empire, which includes the dynasties from the eleventh to the seventeenth, lasted about a thousand years (2700–1635 B.C.). The capital was transferred from Memphis to Thebes in upper Egypt. The successive sovereigns of this empire have left their names in notable monuments, literary productions, or public works. Amenemhat I. (2466 B.C.) displayed great vigor as a ruler, and made conquests in Asiatic territory. In describing his beneficent reign he says, “I caused the mourner to mourn no longer, and his lamentation was no longer heard.”

Usertsen I. (2446 B.C.) extended his authority into the Sinaitic peninsula, and built the temple of Karnak, which



PYRAMIDS



was enlarged and enriched by subsequent sovereigns. Usertsen III. (2340 B.C.) conquered Ethiopia, and fixed the southern boundary of Egypt at the second cataract, where he built two strong fortresses. He was succeeded by Amenemhat III. (2305 B.C.), who constructed Lake Moeris as a storage reservoir for the waters of the Nile, and built the celebrated Labyrinth palace, which Herodotus says surpassed all the architectural works of Greece.

**The Hyksos or Shepherd Kings.** — The Hyksos or Shepherd Kings were an Asiatic people who during the thirteenth dynasty, about 2100 B.C., established themselves in Egypt. They probably came from Syria or Arabia, and are characterized by Manetho as "men of ignoble birth out of the eastern parts." Their conquest, according to the Egyptian historian, was characterized by ruthless destruction and cruelty. "They burnt down our cities," Manetho says in a passage preserved by Josephus, "and demolished the temples of the gods, and used all the inhabitants after a most barbarous manner." The royal residence of the conquerors was fixed at Pelusium, or Avaris, a border stronghold, and at Tanis, a populous city of the eastern Delta. The dominion of the Hyksos was confined chiefly to lower Egypt; only for a brief period did their sovereignty extend over upper Egypt.

Whatever may have been the life of the Hyksos prior to their invasion of Egypt, it is certain that they adopted the higher civilization of the conquered territory. They assumed the titles of Egyptian sovereigns, and erected temples to the Egyptian gods. The monuments that have descended to us from their time prove that they fully adopted the culture, art, and religion of Egypt. The length of the Hyksos domination is estimated by Manetho at 511 years.



**Relation to the Hebrews.**—The presence of these Arabian or Syrian conquerors in Egypt throws an interesting light on early Hebrew history. When Abraham was driven from Canaan by a famine, he was kindly dealt with by the Egyptian king,<sup>1</sup> who recognized in him, not an alien, but a compatriot. This kindly attitude toward Syrian immigrants explains the rapid advancement of Joseph in the house of Potiphar, captain of the king's guard, and his subsequent advancement, as related in the closing chapters of Genesis, to the office of prime minister of the realm. It explains, likewise, the courtesy with which Pharaoh received Jacob's numerous household, and the readiness with which he assigned them a home in the fertile district of Goshen. The native Egyptians, to whose caste prejudice "every shepherd is an abomination,"<sup>2</sup> would have shown themselves intolerant to the Hebrew immigrants.

**New Theban Empire (1635-332 B.C.).**—At length the Hyksos kings were driven from their stronghold at Pelusium by a vigorous king of upper Egypt, Aahmes I. (1635 B.C.), and the new Theban empire was established. Egypt speedily rose to the rank of a world power. Tehutimes I. (1590 B.C.), for example, pushed his conquests in Asia as far as the Euphrates; and Tehutimes III. (1530 B.C.) made no fewer than fifteen campaigns into Syria.

The eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties, extending from 1635 to 1235 B.C., was a period of great national development. Art, literature, and commerce flourished in a high degree. Among the memorable achievements of this period may be mentioned the temple of Luxor, the famous avenue of the sphinxes between Karnak and Luxor, and the palace and tomb of Tel-el-Amarna. An active corre-

<sup>1</sup> Gen. 12: 10.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 46: 34.

spondence was maintained in cuneiform characters with princes in Syria and Mesopotamia. The discovery of three hundred cuneiform tablets at Tel-el-Amarna in 1887 has thrown much light on the relations existing between Egypt and western Asia.

**Ramses II.** (1345 B.C.). — There is one king of the nineteenth dynasty who deserves particular notice. It is Ramses II., whose warlike prowess has earned for him the title of "the Great." He is well known to us through the account contained in the first chapter of Exodus. He was "the Pharaoh of the oppression," who regarded it as a measure of wise public policy to prevent the multiplication of an alien race in the midst of Egypt. "Now there arose up a new king over Egypt," says the sacred record, "which knew not Joseph. And he said unto his people, behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land."<sup>1</sup>

During his long reign of sixty-seven years, Ramses II. busied himself with building cities and creating works of art. Through the enforced labors of the Israelites, he built the treasure-cities of Pithom and Ramses, in which he stored grain to provide for his people in case of famine or invasion. The city of Pithom was excavated in 1883, and the treasure-chambers themselves, with brick partitions from eight to ten feet thick, were discovered. Ramses II. constructed temples, palaces, and tombs, and erected tall granite obelisks, one of which now adorns the Place de la Concorde in Paris. The war poem of Pentaur, a production of vigorous thought and expression, describes his

<sup>1</sup> Ex. 1: 8-10.

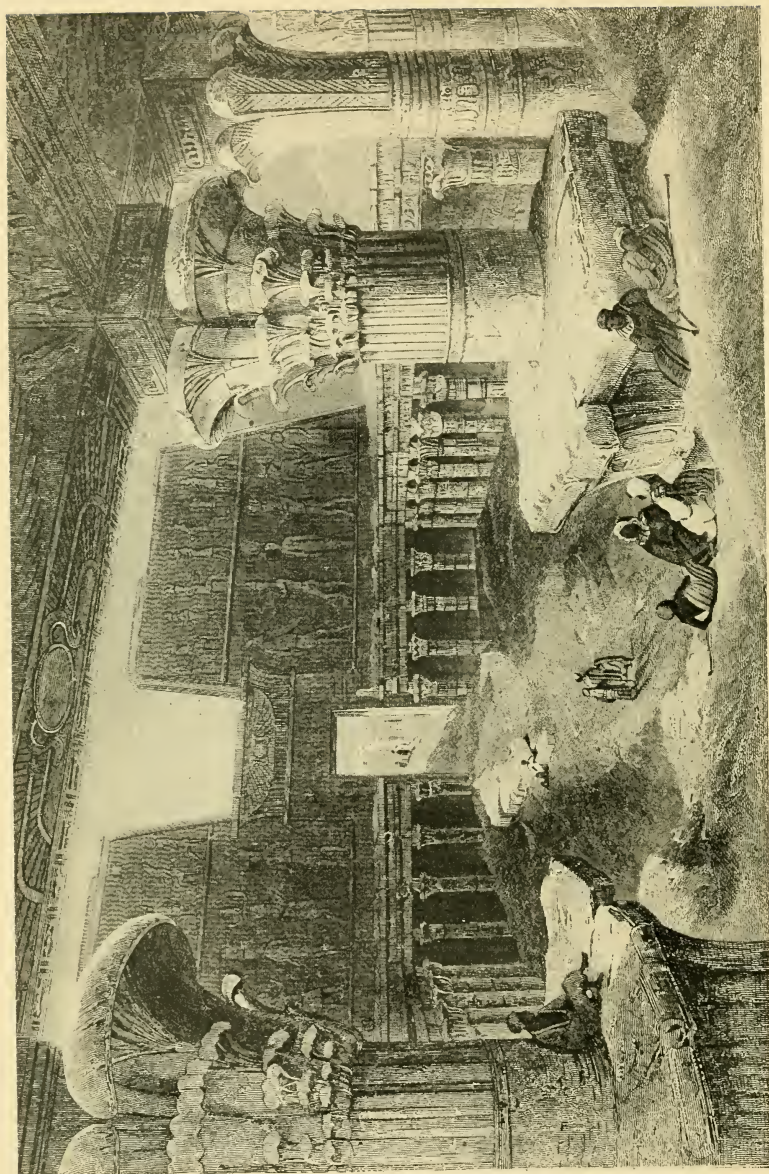
heroism at the battle of Kadesh. A bust of this king, preserved in the British Museum, shows a countenance of calm dignity, and resourceful intelligence.

**Subsequent Relations with Israel.** — The cruel oppression of the Hebrews, who had grown to be a numerous people, was not to go on indefinitely. Under Menephtah II., who lacked the martial genius of his father, Ramses II., there were uprisings on all sides against the despotism of Egypt. These revolts, which taxed the energies and military power of the king to the utmost, afforded a favorable opportunity for the Israelites to escape from their bondage. The troubles of the Egyptian monarch were aggravated by a series of national calamities described in Exodus as the ten plagues. At length, under the able leadership of Moses, the enslaved Hebrews rose in a body, and began a long and toilsome march toward the home of their ancestors in Canaan. The Egyptian army that went in pursuit of the fugitives was overwhelmed in the waters of the Red Sea.

During the later dynasties, Egypt frequently came into touch with the Hebrews after their settlement in "the Promised Land." As we learn in the third chapter of 1 Kings, "Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David," where he built for her a magnificent palace. The Egyptian king bestowed upon his daughter as dowry the city of Gezer, which he had captured from the Canaanites.

The division of the Hebrew kingdom in 930 B.C. made the people of Israel an easy prey. Accordingly, as we read in 2 Chronicles, Shishak invaded Canaan 925 B.C. with "twelve hundred chariots and threescore thousand horsemen." He attacked Jerusalem, and "took away the





TEMPLE OF KARNAK



treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house." <sup>1</sup>

**Culture and Art.** — As indicated in the preceding sketch, the Egyptians excelled in culture and art. The ancient Greeks looked upon Egypt as a school of wisdom. Long before the Greeks were known to history, the dwellers on the Nile had developed a high civilization. Grecian philosophers and lawgivers — Pythagoras, Plato, Solon, Lycurgus — visited Egypt to increase their store of learning. It is said in praise of Moses that he "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." <sup>2</sup>

The temples and tombs of Egypt were ornamented with paintings and sculpture, which were in large measure conventional and symbolic. Though Egyptian artists, as a rule, did not follow nature, we have what seem to be excellent likenesses of many sovereigns belonging to the Middle empire. The Egyptians excelled in the mechanic arts. Great perfection was attained in spinning and weaving; glass was manufactured, and some of the secrets of coloring it have baffled modern ingenuity; iron and the common mechanical and agricultural implements made from it were in general use. Mighty pyramids and majestic temples witness not only to lofty artistic conception, but to a high order of mechanical skill. The temple of Karnak has been pronounced the proudest architectural achievement of man.

**Literature.** — The literature of Egypt, as it has been preserved, represents almost every species of writing. The inscriptions contain invaluable historical records. The *Prisse Papyrus*, which was written in the fifth dynasty (about 3400 B.C.), is said to be the oldest book in the world. In subject-matter it resembles the book of Prov-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Chron. 12:9.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 7:22.



erbs. "If thou art become great," the author, Ptah-Hotep, says, "after thou hast been lowly, and if thou hast heaped up riches after poverty, being because of that the chiefest in the city; let not thy heart be puffed up because of thy riches, for it is God who has given them unto thee. Despise not another who is as thou wast; be towards him as towards thy equal."

The "Book of the Dead" is a work of religious and funeral rites. Its value is enhanced by illustrations. Its moral code embraced all the prohibitions contained in the Mosaic decalogue. Though parts of the "Book of the Dead" are of far greater antiquity, the papyrus copy in the British Museum dates from the eighteenth dynasty (about 1500 B.C.).

In the literature of Egypt we find lyric and epic poems, some of which seem quite modern in their heroic or tender sentiment. What seems still more remarkable, there are romantic tales, such as "The Shipwrecked Sailor" and "The Story of the Two Brothers," that have the merit of literary skill and personal interest.

**Religion.** — The Egyptians were preëminently a religious people. Their gods, among whom may be mentioned Ptah, Amen, Ra, Osiris, Horus, and Isis, were almost innumerable. This extraordinary polytheism finds its explanation, perhaps, in the divided state of the country in prehistoric times, when every community or tribe had its patron deity. In later times, with the establishment of a single government, their various divinities were united in a single hierarchy, in which their functions were often confused and contradictory.

In honor of the various gods great temples were reared, some of which, resisting the corroding power of centuries, still excite a profound admiration. There were numerous

festivals, which made the life of the Egyptians, in large measure, a round of religious ceremony. A strange feature of Egyptian religion was its animal worship. The cat, ibis, hawk, and beetle were universally recognized as sacred. Apis was the sacred bull worshipped at Memphis as an incarnation of Osiris. A reminiscence of Egyptian polytheism and animal worship is found among the Hebrews at Sinai, who, impatient at the prolonged absence of Moses, gathered about the molten calf, and exclaimed, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."<sup>1</sup>

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#### RESEARCH WORK

See remark, under this heading, at the close of the preceding chapter.

Hebrew ethnological traditions, Gen. 10.

Migration of Abraham, Gen. 11 : 27-32 ; 12 : 1-9.

The war between Mesopotamian and Canaanite kings, Gen. 15.

A description of Nineveh, Jonah 3.

The deportation of Israel into Assyria, 2 Kings 17.

The invasion of Sennacherib and his disaster at Jerusalem, 2 Kings 18 : 13-37 ; 19 : 1-36.

The character and destruction of Nineveh, Nahum ; Zeph. 2 : 13-15 ; Ezek. 31 : 3-17 ; Is. 10 : 5-19.

A description of Nebuchadnezzar's court and empire, Dan. 1-5.

The conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, 2 Kings, 24 and 25.

As foretold by the prophet, Jer. 21 : 2-14.

The lament of the captive Hebrews in Babylon, Ps. 137.

The destruction of Babylon as predicted by the prophets, Is. 13 : 1-22 ; 21 : 1-10 ; 47 : 1-15 ; Jer. 50 : 1-46 ; 51 : 1-64. As accomplished, Dan. 5.

The story of creation, Gen. 1 : 1-31 ; 2 : 1-25.

The story of the flood, Gen. 6, 7, and 8.

Abraham in Egypt, Gen. 12 : 10-20.

The biography of Joseph, Gen. 37-50.

<sup>1</sup>Ex. 32 : 4.

The migration of Jacob into Egypt, Gen. 46, 47.

The oppressive measures adopted by Ramses II. against the flourishing Hebrews, Ex. 1 : 7-22.

The childhood of Moses, Ex. 2 : 1-10.

The migration of the enslaved Hebrews from Egypt, Ex. 3-14.

A beautiful triumphal ode, Ex. 15 : 1-22.

The expedition of Shishak, King of Egypt, against Jerusalem, 2 Chron. 12 : 2-12.

The worship of the golden calf at Sinai, Ex. 32 : 1-24.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

**Historical Position.** — In many respects the people of Israel were insignificant. They made no contribution to art; they were lacking in high intellectual culture; and for the most part, their political power was comparatively feeble. Except for a brief period under David and Solomon, the Hebrews were unable to resist a formidable invasion from Babylonia or Egypt. Their national life was developed in the presence of a much older civilization. In comparison with the mighty empires of the Euphrates and the Tigris, they counted for little.

**Contribution to Human Progress.** — Nevertheless they occupy a prominent place in the history of the ancient world. On the moral and spiritual side of life, the Hebrews did far more for human progress than either the Babylonians or the Egyptians. In the midst of a universal polytheism, the rites of which were often cruel and impure, Israel developed a spiritual monotheism, which has since been generally accepted by the most enlightened nations of the modern world. The Hebrew prophets and lawgivers were the first to magnify the existence of one Supreme Being, who in the beginning "created the heaven and the earth."

Above all other peoples of antiquity the Hebrews emphasized the necessity of personal and civic righteousness; and in the fulness of time they brought forth the great Teacher of our race. Religion, though with many back-

slidings and perversions, was the central and controlling influence in Hebrew life. Through the spiritual insight of their greatest leaders, and through their strong emphasis of the moral elements of life, the people of Israel achieved a distinct place in universal history, and placed all subsequent ages under a deep and permanent obligation.<sup>1</sup>

**Land of Canaan.** — The land of the Hebrews was a part of Syria. From Mt. Hermon on the north it extended southward for a hundred and fifty miles to the Arabian desert. Its width, stretching from the Mediterranean on the west to the desert region on the east, was about one hundred miles. From the narrow strip of coast plain rose a table-land, which was cut by numerous well-watered vales and marked by the famous summits of Tabor, Carmel, and Gerezim. The country from north to south was divided by the deep valley of the Jordan, beyond which fertile highlands again stretched away to the desert of Arabia.

In ancient times this land of the Hebrews, known as Canaan, was exceedingly fertile — “a land flowing with milk and honey.”<sup>2</sup> In Deuteronomy it is characterized as “a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, springing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig trees and pomegranates; a land of olives and honey; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “It is the marvel of history that this little people, beset and despised by all the earth for ages, maintains its solidarity unimpaired. Unique among all the peoples of the earth, it has come undoubtedly to the present day from the most distant antiquity. Forty, perhaps fifty, centuries rest upon this venerable contemporary of Egypt, Chaldea, and Troy.” — J. K. HOSMER, “The Jews,” p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Numb. 13: 27.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 8: 7.

**Native Tribes.**—From prehistoric times Canaan was occupied by various tribes of Semites, among whom may be mentioned the Philistines, the Jebusites, and Ammonites, the Amorites, and the Hivites. These tribes were not uncivilized; and at the time of the Hebrew invasion, presently to be noticed, they lived in cities, carried on agriculture and trade, and maintained regal forms of government. Situated between the great monarchies of the Euphrates and the Nile, to which they were at times in subjection, the Canaanites shared in the culture, customs, and superstitions of Babylonia and Egypt.

They were skilled in the arts of war. The name of one of their cities, Kirjath-sepher, “the city of books,” seems to indicate the cultivation of literature. Their chief divinities were Baal and Astarte, which were worshipped with licentious rites; and the people resorted to divination and augury, consulted “familiar spirits,” and practised other superstitions which the sacred writer stigmatizes as “an abomination unto the Lord.” At various times the people of Israel were contaminated by the corrupt teaching and vile rites of their Canaanitish neighbors.

**National Beginnings.**—According to the records in Genesis, which constitute our principal source of information, the progenitor of the Hebrew people was Abraham who migrated some 2000 years before our era, from “Ur of the Chaldees” to Canaan. His descendants, Isaac and Jacob, led a patriarchal and nomadic life, which was distinguished alone for an unshaken faith in Jehovah. Many interesting traditions of their early life in Canaan—domestic tragedies as well as romantic idyls—have fortunately been preserved to us. The wooing of seven years to gain the hand of Rachel, the reconciliation of Jacob and



Esau, and the tragedy of Joseph — these are delightful pictures of that distant patriarchal life.<sup>1</sup>

A famine in Canaan led to the removal of Jacob and his numerous household into Egypt, where his son Joseph, under a Hyksos king, had risen to high dignity and power. In the course of several centuries, these Hebrew immigrants, who had settled in Goshen — a district in the northeastern part of Egypt — became so numerous as to excite fears at the Egyptian court. Accordingly, as we have already seen, Ramses II., "a Pharaoh who knew not Joseph," adopted cruel measures of repression. The Hebrews were enslaved and burdened with cruel tasks. At length, after a period of extreme hardship and suffering, they migrated in a body, about 1490 B.C. according to the usual chronology, toward the "Promised Land" of Canaan. Their number is given at "about 600,000 that were men, beside children." The Egyptian army that pursued the fleeing host met with irreparable disaster at the Red Sea.

**In the Wilderness.** — But the Hebrews were not destined to enter at once upon their promised inheritance. They were to spend many years in the wilderness region south of Canaan, where their religious and national life was to assume definite shape. The bonds of racial sympathy, which naturally drew the Hebrews together during the trials of their Egyptian bondage, were to be further strengthened by the common dangers and hardships of the wilderness. The books of Exodus and Numbers relate many interesting events of this migratory period, — events that

<sup>1</sup> "If criticism, with the help of archæology, has failed to establish the literal truth of these stories as personal biographies, it has, on the other hand, displayed their utter fidelity to the characters of the peoples they reflect, and to the facts of the world and the Divine guidance in which these peoples developed. The power of the patriarchal narratives on the heart, the imagination, the faith of men can never die; it is immortal with truthfulness to the realities of human nature and God's education of mankind." — GEORGE ADAM SMITH, "Modern Criticism and the Preaching of the Old Testament," p. 109.

subsequently embedded themselves in the history of the Hebrew people and in the thought of the Christian church.

The hero of this national movement was Moses, the law-giver and prophet of Israel. He is deservedly regarded as one of the great figures of history. His work was two-fold in its character. He gave the multitudes under him a complete civil administration. He not only drew up a code of laws, which his Egyptian culture easily enabled him to do, but he also appointed able and upright men to be rulers and judges under him. "And Moses chose able men out of all Israel," so runs the record, "and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves." <sup>1</sup>

But more significant still were the religious institutions which, under divine guidance, he established for his people. A special covenant was entered into between Jehovah and the people, by which the polytheistic idolatries of Egypt were completely swept away. Monotheism became the official faith, as it had long been the traditional belief, of the Hebrews. A comprehensive moral code, including both religious and social duties, was promulgated. It is known as the Ten Commandments, and is held in high honor to-day.<sup>2</sup> An elaborate ritual of worship, suggestions for which may have been borrowed from the temple cere-

<sup>1</sup> Ex. 18: 25, 26.

<sup>2</sup> "The grand distinction of the Decalogue is that it deals only with that which is fundamental in religion and morals. 'Love God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself'—is its sum. There is no *ritual*, but only the ethical, the universally important and perennially valid. Even the fourth commandment is ethical at the core, a humane statute securing a resting-time for labor drudges, slaves, and even for the beast of burden."—R. S. MOULTON, "The Bible as Literature," p. 39.

monies of Egypt, was established, and a hereditary line of priests was ordained to have charge of the services of the tabernacle, — a portable sanctuary suited to the migratory life of Israel in the wilderness.

**Conquest of Canaan.** — After wandering forty years in the wilderness, the Hebrews turned northward and approached Canaan from the eastern side of the Jordan. From the summit of Mt. Pisgah, Moses, the strong and faithful leader of Israel, caught a splendid glimpse of the Promised Land, which he was not himself to enter. After his death, at an advanced age, Joshua became his successor, and pushed his conquests to the west of the river with tireless energy and unsparing thoroughness. He displayed the barbarous cruelty that was only too common in the military campaigns of that age. In the capture of Jericho, for example, it is stated that the Hebrew invaders “utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old, and ox, sheep, and ass, with the edge of the sword.”<sup>1</sup>

The twelfth chapter of Joshua — the book that describes the conquest — gives a list of thirty-one kings, whom the Hebrew leader subdued. Every town and city in the land had its local prince or king. Sometimes these princes formed extensive alliances against the invaders; but the Hebrews, hardened by their wanderings in the wilderness, proved themselves irresistible conquerors. After the completion of the conquest, which still left here and there considerable communities of the Canaanitish races, the country was divided among the twelve tribes of Israel. Each tribe constituted a province under its own elders or rulers.

The Hebrews were distinguished from the native population of Canaan by the purity and exclusiveness of their

<sup>1</sup> Josh. 6: 21.

monotheistic religion. The religious element dominated the life of Israel. Extraordinary precautions were exercised to prevent idolatry. Intermarriage was prohibited; and all the monuments of idolatrous worship were destroyed. "Ye shall destroy their altars," it is commanded in Deuteronomy, "and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire."<sup>1</sup> The first and supreme duty of the Israelites is expressed in these words: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."<sup>2</sup>

**Period of the Judges.**—After the conquest there followed a long period—the usual chronology makes it some three hundred years—in which the twelve tribes were without political organization and unity. The only bond, not always a strong one, was a common religious faith.<sup>3</sup> It was a period of confusion, tumult, and bloodshed, for "in those days," to quote the book of Judges, our chief authority, "there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."<sup>4</sup> The children of Israel, forgetful of the solemn admonitions of Moses and Joshua, frequently apostatized from the religion of Jehovah to engage in the alluring worship of Baal and Ashtaroth, which they adopted from the older tribes of Canaan. In addition to intertribal conflicts of the Hebrews, there were frequent wars with the native races of Canaan, and the Israelites were often brought into subjection.

**Various Deliverers.**—These times of national trial and disaster naturally brought strong, capable leaders to the

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 7: 5.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 6: 5.

<sup>3</sup> "In virtue of their common religion the Israelites of the north and the south retained a sense of essential unity in spite of political separation and repeated wars; and it was felt that the division of the tribes was inconsistent with the true destiny of Jehovah's people."—W. R. SMITH, "The Prophets of Israel," p. 48.

<sup>4</sup> Judges 17: 6

front, who, in the original records, are called Judges.<sup>1</sup> Several of them have become well known. Ehud, by an act of treachery, slew Eglon, the king of the Moabites, and summoning the tribe of Ephraim to his standard, he threw off the Moabite yoke. Deborah and Barak delivered the northern tribes from the galling oppression of the Canaanites — a victory that is celebrated in a martial song of exultant and pious fervor. The victory of Gideon over the Midianites by means of a stratagem; the narrative of Samson's slaughter of the Philistines and of his ignominious capture and death; the triumph of Jephthah over the Ammonites and his fatal vow leading to the sacrifice of his only daughter, — these are interesting stories made familiar to many in childhood.

**The Hebrew Monarchy.** — The time of the Judges was essentially a formative period. Through bitter experience the Hebrew tribes, not unlike the American colonies, were brought to recognize the need of closer union. Their only security against internal anarchy and alien subjugation was found in a national organization, such as existed among the peoples about them.

When the Hebrew elders demanded a king, the aged and saintly Samuel, the last of the Judges, endeavored to dissuade them from their purpose. Accordingly, in an interesting discourse, he portrayed the tyrannous rule of an Oriental despot. "He will take your sons," he said, "and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he

<sup>1</sup> Judges 2: 16-19.



will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants.”<sup>1</sup>

**Saul.** — But the monarchical movement was not to be checked. Accordingly Saul, of the tribe of Benjamin, was selected as the first Hebrew king at a national assembly held at Mizpeh (1020 B.C.). His tall and handsome person delighted the multitude, who hailed the new sovereign with the spontaneous acclaim, “God save the king.” Important events speedily confirmed the royal power. Saul waged a vigorous and successful campaign against the haughty Ammonites—a triumph that silenced the malcontent opponents of the monarchy. A little later he overcame the Philistines and the Amalekites. These victories, which restored the independence of Israel, amply vindicated the establishment of the kingdom.

But Saul, though a brave patriotic leader, was deficient in statesmanlike ability. The latter years of his reign were saddened by the alienation of the priestly class and by his violent jealousy of David, whose heroism had won him great popular favor. At last, in a battle with the Philistines, in which three of his sons had been slain, Saul himself was sorely wounded, and fearing torture at the hands of the enemy, he fell upon his sword.

**David** (1002 B.C.). — The second king of Israel was David, a man of fearless courage, of large experience, and of regal ability. His triumph over Goliath, the Philistine champion, had made him a national hero. Though the jealousy of Saul had for several years made him an outlaw and driven him into exile, he tactfully cultivated the favor of the tribal leaders. He was especially

<sup>1</sup> Sam. 8: 11-20.



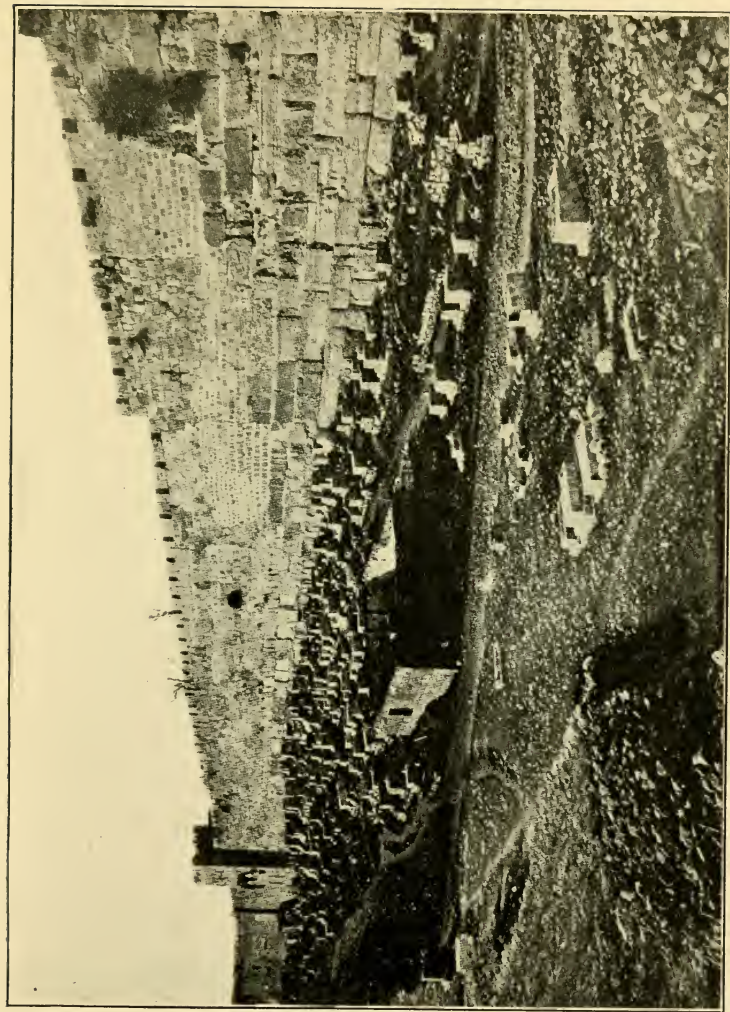
strong in the favor of the influential priestly class. Accordingly, after a brief period of rivalry and confusion, he was chosen king by "all the elders of Israel," and at once he adopted thoughtful measures to strengthen the royal power.

**A National Capital.**—Unlike Saul, he recognized the utility of a national capital and princely court; and to this end he forcibly took possession of the city of the Jebusites, which was subsequently to be known throughout the earth as Jerusalem, or the city of David. Here, through the coöperation of Hiram, King of Tyre, he built a palace, and surrounded himself with all the ceremony and insignia of regal authority.

Furthermore, he brought the ark of the covenant from a private house at Kirjath-jearim, where it had long remained in comparative neglect, and in the midst of great national festivities he installed it in a splendid tabernacle at Jerusalem. No wiser steps could have been taken. By fixing the seat of government at Jerusalem, and by making it, at the same time, the centre of the national religion, David immeasurably strengthened his influence and power.

**A Strong Nation.**—In his long reign of forty years, he raised the Hebrew people to a dignity and might which they had not previously known. He overcame the Philistines, the hereditary enemies of Israel; he defeated the Moabites; he established strongholds in Edom, an Arabian district southeast of Canaan. For a brief period he realized the ambitious dreams of the people, and made the Hebrew monarchy a formidable power in southwestern Asia.

**Personal Traits.**—Not wholly taken up with his regal duties, he delighted in music and poetry. He wrote nu-



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merous psalms or hymns, which have earned for him the proud title of "sweet singer of Israel." But, in spite of his high and varied endowments, there was a darker side to his character. He was sometimes cruel and licentious; and the later years of his reign were disturbed by the formidable rebellion of his favorite, uncontrolled son, Absalom. But in his darker deeds he never became entirely hardened, and every transgression was followed by heartfelt penitence and humility.

**Solomon** (970 B.C.). — In order to thwart the ambition of his eldest surviving son, Adonijah, David, a short time before his death, had Solomon proclaimed king. The young sovereign entered upon his reign with a high sense of responsibility, and in a notable prayer he asked, not for riches or long life, but for "an understanding heart to judge the people."<sup>1</sup>

He was inclined to peace rather than to war. He improved the civic administration of the kingdom; and for this purpose, without regard to the ancient tribal limits, he divided the kingdom into twelve districts, over each of which he placed an imperial officer. Each province was required to provide in turn for the maintenance of the court. This requirement was not a light burden, for every day the king's household demanded, according to the ancient record, "thirty measures [80 barrels] of fine flour, and threescore measures [160 barrels] of meal, ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pasture, and an hundred sheep, besides harts, and gazelles, and roebucks, and fatted fowl."<sup>2</sup>

**A Great Builder.** — Solomon was preëminently the building king of Israel. As his people were not skilled in the arts of architecture, he concluded a treaty with Hiram, King

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 3 : 9.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Kings 4 : 22, 23.

of Tyre in Phœnicia, by which, in return for grain, oil, and wine, he was to receive lumber from Lebanon and skilled workmen in wood and stone. In addition to the royal palaces, the most famous of all his structures was the temple at Jerusalem, which, in its rich gildings and furnishings, displayed extraordinary splendor.

To carry out his vast building plans, which covered a period of twenty years, Solomon imitated the kings of Babylonia and Egypt, and kept a great army at work in the forests and quarries. Influenced by the example of Phœnicia, the most energetic and most daring maritime nation of antiquity, he encouraged commerce, which had previously been neglected by the Hebrews. An active trade sprang up between the cities of Phœnicia and Joppa, the seaport of Jerusalem; and at Ezion-geber, on the Red Sea, Solomon maintained a fleet of vessels, which skirted the coasts of Arabia, India, and Africa.

**Decadence.** — The later years of Solomon's reign showed signs of decadence. Though gifted with preëminent wisdom, the report of which had drawn the queen of Sheba to Jerusalem, he was led astray by the voluptuousness of his splendid court. His harem contained, if we may trust the figures of the record, seven hundred princesses as wives and three hundred concubines.

Through their influence, many of whom came from the courts of surrounding nations, he was betrayed into an idolatry that outraged the religious sense of his people. In spite of the external splendor he had introduced into his capital — a period when "silver was as plentiful on the streets as stones" — the wisest of kings, as Jewish tradition regarded him, stirred up profound discontent among

the people, and effectually undermined the stability of the monarchy.<sup>1</sup>

**The Kingdom Divided.** — The catastrophe, for which the folly and oppression of Solomon had prepared the way, was not long in coming. At his death, Rehoboam, his son by an Ammonite princess, ascended the throne. At a national assembly convened at Shechem, the people petitioned for an alleviation of their grievous burdens. A spirit of patriotism and concession on the part of the new king would have established his sovereignty. Unfortunately, brought up in an atmosphere of luxury and absolutism, Rehoboam, disdaining the wise advice of his aged counsellors, and lending a willing ear to his young, inexperienced courtiers, returned a haughty and exasperating answer. "My father chastised you with whips," he said, "but I will chastise you with scorpions."

This tyrannical spirit was immediately met by a general revolt. Under the capable leadership of Jeroboam, who had stirred up an unsuccessful rebellion under Solomon, ten of the tribes at once set up a rival monarchy, known henceforth as the kingdom of Israel (930 B.C.). Only two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, remained loyal to Rehoboam, and formed the kingdom of Judah. This unfortunate breach between the tribes was never healed; and weakening the force of the Hebrew people, it led to their early and inevitable overthrow.

<sup>1</sup> "However great the splendor of Israel in Solomon's reign, this advance was not without a darker side. The new paths in which Solomon led his people brought the Israelites comfort and opulence, the advantages and impulses of a higher civilization and more active intellectual life. But with the splendor and luxury of the court, and the increasing wealth, the old simplicity of manners disappeared. The land had to bear the burden of a rule which was completely assimilated to the forms of court life and the mode of government established in Egypt and Syria, in Babylon and Assyria." — MAX DUNCKER, "History of Antiquity," Vol. II., p. 192.



**Social Conditions.** — It is not necessary to follow the history of the two kingdoms in detail; it is largely a record of hostility and war — a period of confusion and decadence. The worship of Jehovah declined, particularly in the kingdom of Israel. As a matter of state policy Jeroboam had introduced idolatry into his kingdom in order to weaken the influence of the temple service at Jerusalem. "If the people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem," he argued, "then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even to Rehoboam, King of Judah."<sup>1</sup>

From time to time there arose brave, pious, and patriotic men, known as prophets, — Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and others, — who rebuked, in words of glowing eloquence, the idolatry, luxury, and vices of the people. In the time of Ahab, about 870 B.C., who had formed an alliance with Tyre and introduced the worship of Baal, Elijah stands forth as a prophetic hero. Hosea, a little later, is sharp and unsparing in denouncing the degenerate state of society: "There is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood."<sup>2</sup> These are representatives of the prophets who in this period exerted a great influence, and at times determined the course of Hebrew history.

**Fall of Israel and Judah.** — The divided and weakened condition of the Hebrew people invited foreign invasion. Rehoboam had occupied the throne but five years when he was attacked by Shishak of Egypt, who captured Jerusalem and despoiled the temple — a victory portrayed on the walls at Karnak. The kingdom of Israel lasted about two hundred years, during which there was a succession of nine-

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 12: 27.

<sup>2</sup> Hosea 4: 2.

teen kings. Finally, as we learned in the last chapter, it was destroyed by Sargon II., who in 722 B.C. captured Samaria, the capital, and deported the people into the eastern part of the Assyrian empire.

The kingdom of Judah lasted about three hundred and fifty years; and among its nineteen sovereigns there were men of distinguished ability and character. Worthy of special mention are Josiah and Hezekiah, under whom a religious reformation was effected. Finally, like its rival in the north, the kingdom of Judah fell a prey to foreign invaders, and 586 B.C. the people were carried in captivity to Babylon.

**The Babylonian Exile.** — The Hebrews remained in captivity, as their prophets had foretold, for seventy years. It was a period of great significance. It wrought a national transformation. With the extinction of the political power of the Hebrews, there came in some measure a spiritual regeneration. Never afterwards did the Jews, as they are henceforth called, show any tendency to polytheism. Their adherence to Jehovah, the one Supreme Being, remains unsullied by the frequent lapses into idolatry that characterized their previous life in Canaan.

Through contemporary prophets and a few of the psalms we obtain glimpses of the period of exile. In the brief chapter of his prophecy, Obadiah reveals the violence of the Edomites toward his subjugated and enfeebled countrymen who had been left in the land of Judah. The book of Lamentations, as its name indicates, is a threnody over the ruin of Jerusalem. "How doth the city sit solitary," exclaims Jeremiah, "that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! She that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she be-

come tributary!"<sup>1</sup> In the 137th Psalm there is a pathetic picture of the sorrow of the exiles: "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, sing us one of the songs of Zion."

But in this period of humiliation and sorrow, the leaders of the Jews were upheld by a great religious and patriotic faith. They encouraged the people with hopes of a coming deliverance. "Build ye houses," wrote Jeremiah to the captives in Babylon, "and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them. . . . For thus saith the Lord, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place."<sup>2</sup> And Ezekiel, by the startling vision of the valley of dry bones, revived the dead hopes of his people. He represents God as saying, "Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the land of Israel."<sup>3</sup>

**The Restoration.** — After the capture of Babylon (538 B.C.), Cyrus, the king of Persia, granted the Jews permission to return to their native land. According to the proclamation preserved in the first chapter of Ezra, the Persian conqueror felt an obligation to restore the temple at Jerusalem. He may have been moved to this remarkable step by the friendly welcome he received from the Jews in Babylon. A great Hebrew prophet had called him the anointed of the Lord, and predicted his mighty conquests<sup>4</sup>—an official recognition that may well have conciliated his favor.

<sup>1</sup> Lam. 1: 1.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. 29: 5, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Ez. 37: 12.

<sup>4</sup> Is. 45: 1.

The first expedition of the exiles was under the leadership of Zerubbabel, who led about fifty thousand of the Jews from Babylon to Jerusalem and neighboring cities. The splendid vessels of the temple, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away and consecrated to his gods, were magnanimously restored to the Jews. In a few years the rebuilding of the temple was completed, and the worship of Jehovah solemnly reinstated. In promoting this work, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were especially active.

There were other expeditions from Babylon under Ezra and Nehemiah. After nearly a hundred years, the walls of Jerusalem, in spite of the plottings of enemies, were completed. Important social reforms were inaugurated. A full account of the restoration is found in Ezra and Nehemiah. Canaan did not regain its independence, but remained a Persian province until that famous empire was overthrown by Alexander the Great (333 B.C.).

**The Controlling Factor.**—Throughout the long and varied course of Hebrew history, covering about a thousand years, its central and unifying factor is the religion of Jehovah.<sup>1</sup> The literature of this Old Testament, which reflects the inner life of the people, makes this truth very clear. In almost every book the presence and providence of Jehovah are recognized. His hand was recognized alike in the joys and the sorrows that came to the people of Israel. In Exodus we read that He relaxed the gripe of cruelty by sore visitations in Egypt, and that He guided the fleeing multitude by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. He established a covenant with them at

<sup>1</sup> "The peculiarity of the biblical religion is that in it this idea of the connection of religion with morality is the all-dominating one." — JAMES ORR, "Problem of the Old Testament," p. 43.

Sinai in the midst of imposing splendors. He provided for their needs in the wilderness, and gave them victory over the tribes of Canaan.

For a long time after the settlement in the Promised Land, the worship of Jehovah was the chief bond of unity among the separate tribes. After the building of the temple, its splendid ceremonial sacrifices and the great annual festivals at Jerusalem helped to centralize and strengthen the monarchy. National disasters were regarded as punitive acts of Jehovah on account of the sins of the people. Their sacred poetry, particularly the Psalms, is filled with the praises of Jehovah; and the eloquent discourses of the prophets set forth the character, sovereignty, and righteousness of God with a fervor and insight that have never been surpassed. Above all the other nations of antiquity, religion was the great factor of Hebrew life; and their thoughts of God have become a part of the religious treasures of the modern world.

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## RESEARCH WORK

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- The overthrow and captivity of Judah, 2 Kings 24, 25.
- The condition of Jerusalem after its fall, Obadiah 1.
- The pitiable condition of the exiles, Ps. 137.
- Lament over the downfall of Jerusalem, Lam. 1-5.
- The destruction of Babylon foretold, Jer. 50, 51.
- Judgments denounced against Babylon, Is. 47.
- Daniel at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, Dan. 1: 3-21.
- Interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Dan. 2.
- The incident of the golden image and fiery furnace, Dan. 3.
- A second dream and its interpretation, Dan. 4.
- The impious feast of Belshazzar, Dan. 5.
- Official jealousy and its consequences, Dan. 6.
- The story of Esther and Ahasuerus or Xerxes, Esther 1-10.

## 9. THE RESTORATION

- The proclamation of Cyrus for the restoration of the Jews, Ezra 1.
- A list of those returning under Zerubbabel, Ezra 2.
- The worship of Jehovah restored, Ezra 3.
- The decree of Darius, and completion of the temple, Ezra 6.
- The expedition of Ezra at a later time, Ezra 7.
- The agitation in regard to mixed marriages, Ezra 9, 10.
- Nehemiah despatched to Jerusalem by Artaxerxes, Neh. 2.
- The manner of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem, Neh. 4.
- Important social reforms of Nehemiah, Neh. 5.
- The reading and expounding of the law of Moses, Neh. 8.
- A solemn fast and confession, Neh. 9.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE OLD TESTAMENT AS LITERATURE

**Nature of Literature.** — Literature is the written expression of human life. It embodies the thought, emotions, and achievements of man. When the intellectual element predominates, the result is philosophy ; when the emotional element is uppermost, we have poetry ; and when the statement of events is supreme, we have history. When the imagination is the principal faculty at work, the result is fiction in some of its forms of parable, allegory, or tale. In most books, however, these different elements are not kept entirely distinct ; and hence we are apt to find in the same book a combination of thought, feeling, imagination, and fact.

We may take the book of Exodus by way of illustration. It is chiefly, as its name indicates, a narrative of the deliverance of the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. Its statement of actual occurrences makes it chiefly historical. But the author reflects upon the causes of the mighty events that claim his attention. He traces the deliverance to the direct interposition of Jehovah — a fact that renders the book at once philosophical and religious. Furthermore, the soul of the old Hebrew writer is deeply moved by the incidents of the Red Sea ; and accordingly, his kindled feelings burst forth in a song of triumph. Thus, in all the books of the Old Testament, we may recognize, to a greater or less degree, the various elements that enter into the life of man.

**Hebrew Literature.** — In the Old Testament we have an invaluable remnant of the literature of the Hebrew people, — a faithful reflection of their outward and inner life. There are other writings extant, known collectively as the Apocrypha, which are not usually included in the Old Testament; and many treatises — the book of Jasher,<sup>1</sup> the Wars of the Lord,<sup>2</sup> the Acts of Solomon,<sup>3</sup> and various royal chronicles<sup>4</sup> — have unfortunately been lost.

An examination of the Old Testament will show that it is composed of thirty-nine separate books or pamphlets of varying length. The prophecy of Obadiah, for example, consists of a single chapter, while Isaiah contains sixty-six chapters. The authors of many of these books are unknown. If, following the usual view, we hold Moses to be the author of the earliest writings, and Malachi the author of the latest, then the literature of the Old Testament covers a period of a thousand years, — a period longer than the life of Grecian or Roman literature.

But however widely separated in time and place the books of the Old Testament may be, they form a consistent unity through their common religious faith and purpose. With varying clearness and fulness they reveal the existence, righteousness, and providence of Jehovah. This profound religious element distinguishes the Old Testament from all the contemporary writings of Babylonia and Egypt.<sup>5</sup>

**Influence of Environment.** — No literature can be fully

<sup>1</sup> Josh. 10: 13.

<sup>2</sup> Numb. 21: 14.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Kings 11: 41.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Kings 12: 19.

<sup>5</sup> "It records the history and the institutions of a most remarkable people. It gives an insight into their character and usages, into their domestic, social, and political life; particularly it exhibits their religion in its spirit and its outward forms, a religion altogether unique in the ancient world, and the influence of which has been deep and widespread in later times." — W. H. GREEN, "Higher Criticism of the Pentateuch," p. 172.

understood without an acquaintance with the circumstances under which it originated. Hebrew literature was born in the presence of a much older and highly developed civilization. Abraham carried with him from Chaldea a knowledge of Babylonian literature, and Moses was "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." At the time of the migration the Hebrew people as a whole shared the Egyptian culture, in the presence of which they had dwelt for more than four hundred years. Hence we need not be surprised at the perfection of form which belongs even to the earliest productions of Hebrew genius. The evolutionary hypothesis adopted by Wellhausen and some other German scholars seems to lose sight of the advanced civilization that prevailed, long before the days of Moses, from the Tigris to the Nile.

**Race and Epoch.** — In a national literature race and epoch are recognized as moulding influences of great potency. It is important to remember that the Old Testament is an Oriental book, — the product of a race of imaginative temper and deep religious feeling. The Hebrews magnified the religious side of life, and poured forth their religious emotions in fervent poetry and glowing eloquence. It might almost be said of them that they were a God-intoxicated people. The fulness and ardor with which their poets have expressed every phase of religious feeling — faith, penitence, praise, joy — have made the book of Psalms a devotional treasury for thousands of years.

The ardent nature of the Hebrew sometimes manifested itself in malevolence, and then it burst forth in cruel hatred and unholy imprecation. In war he did not rise above the barbarities of his Assyrian contemporaries, and even his prayers to Jehovah sometimes breathed an im-



placable vengeance. In the 108th Psalm, for example, we find a pitiless hate of an enemy: "Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg; let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labor. Let there be none to extend mercy unto him; neither let there be any to favor his fatherless children." This merciless imprecation, so foreign to the teaching of Christ, is an outburst natural to an offended Oriental.

Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that the age, in which the scriptures of the Old Testament were written, was lacking in the scientific spirit. The Hebrew writers, like their contemporaries in Babylonia and Egypt, looked on events with a childlike credulity. Ignorant, in large measure, of the laws of nature, they attributed any unusual event to the immediate agency of Jehovah. Victory was always ascribed to divine favor; defeat was always a proof of divine displeasure. This lack of a scientific spirit, which took no account of secondary causes, was at once a source of weakness and of strength. If it sometimes presents us with a childlike conception of events, it emphasizes the divine element in history. One of the distinguishing and edifying features of the Old Testament is its recognition of the hand of God in individual and national life. It is Jehovah who personally calls Abraham, chooses Moses, controls the destinies of Israel, and directs the turnings and overturnings of the nations.

**Personal Element.** — It is a mistake to suppose, as some writers have done, that surroundings, race, and epoch explain everything in history and literature. There is a personal factor of great importance. From time to time men of exceptional gifts appear, and rising above the level

of their age, become centres of a new and mighty influence. These are providential men—the subjects of a special inspiration, and the leaders of great movements.

Hebrew history, beyond that of any other people, is filled with these inspired men. They stand at the beginning of each era; they lead every significant movement. Abraham becomes the founder of the Hebrew people by a divine vocation; Moses is the chosen agent to lead his people from bondage and give them a national organization; Joshua is the divinely appointed captain to direct the conquest of Canaan; and the judges and prophets were raised up, according to the need of the times, to free the nation from oppression or to call it to righteousness. These providential men are the heroes of Hebrew literature.

**Formation of the Old Testament.**—From the long period of time covered by its various books, it is evident that the Old Testament is a growth. At first there existed only the law of Moses. In successive periods, as men were moved to write or the events of Hebrew history made it necessary, new books were added to the sacred collection. In some cases, as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and a few others, the name of the author and the date of writing are given; but unfortunately, in most instances, these details have been omitted. This fact has given rise to differences of opinion as to the age of certain books; but all biblical students recognize a gradual development of the Old Testament collection of writings. But two or three centuries before Christ the Old Testament had assumed substantially its present form, as is shown by the Greek translation, called the *Septuagint*, which was made at that time.

**Its Careful Preservation.**—The careful preservation of

the Old Testament was due to the profound reverence of the Hebrews for their sacred writings. This reverence was a part of their education. A copy of the Mosaic law was preserved in the ark of the Lord as a precious treasure.<sup>1</sup> It was made the religious duty of every head of a family to teach the law to his children.<sup>2</sup> At the end of every seven years it was read in the hearing of all the people, and every king was required to make a copy with his own hand.<sup>3</sup>

There is a striking instance of this reverence for the Scriptures in Nehemiah. All the people of Jerusalem had assembled to hear "the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel. . . . And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people; and when he opened it, *all the people stood up.*"<sup>4</sup> In the 19th Psalm there is a fine eulogy of the law, which is pronounced "perfect, converting the soul"; and in the first Psalm the man is called blessed, whose "delight is in the law of the Lord."

This reverent regard, which was first felt for the law of Moses, was later extended to all the writings of the Old Testament, and led to a painstaking and even superstitious care in their preservation. "How firmly we have given credit to these books of our nation," says the Jewish historian Josephus, "is evident by what we do; for during so many ages as have already passed, no one hath been so bold as either to add anything to them, to take anything from them, or to make any change in them."<sup>5</sup>

**Classification of Writings.** — A very superficial examination of the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, especially in the Revised Version, reveals points of likeness and difference, which enable us to divide them into several

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 31 : 26.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 6 : 7.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 17 : 18.

<sup>4</sup> Neh. 8 : 5.

<sup>5</sup> Josephus, "Against Apion," 1. 8.

clearly marked classes. There are books that are plainly historical in their character. They are chronicles of leading events in the life of the Hebrew people. As we have already seen, Exodus narrates the escape of the Hebrews from Egyptian servitude. Joshua tells of the conquest of Canaan, and Judges sets forth the social and political condition of Israel prior to the establishment of the monarchy. The books of Kings and Chronicles are narratives of events during the long regal period.

There are other books that are as plainly poetical in their character. In the Revised Version they are printed in poetic form. In Job several persons carry on a debate or dialogue in verse, — a fact that gives the book the character of a drama. The Psalms are brief lyrics or hymns. The book of Proverbs is made up of didactic verse, which appeals to the judgment rather than to the emotions. In the Song of Solomon, as it is called, we have a lyrical drama of love.

The closing books of the Old Testament, beginning with Isaiah, bear still a different character. Their main purpose is neither historical nor poetical. They are collections of brief sermons or addresses, which urge the people to righteousness, and foretell approaching disaster or blessing. Thus, in a general way, we may classify the various books of the Old Testament as *historical*, *poetical*, or *prophetic*.

**Hebrew Historical Writing.** — The historical writing of the Hebrews, as contained in the Old Testament, is unlike the historical writing of the present day. It is not the purpose of Hebrew history to exhibit the manifold life of the people or to trace the political development of the nation. Hence there is no effort to record the customs and occupations of the people, and to present their artistic

and scientific culture. There is no elaborate study of social conditions. What we learn of these things is merely incidental to the main purpose.

Hebrew history has a distinctly religious aim. Its main purpose is to exhibit the dealings of Jehovah with His people, and to establish His character as a covenant-keeping God. It is a commentary on the principle stated in Deuteronomy: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love and keep His commandments to a thousand generations; and repayeth them that hate Him to their face, to destroy them; He will not be slack to him that hateth Him, He will repay him to his face. Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, to do them."<sup>1</sup>

This underlying principle of Hebrew history is clearly brought to light in the book of Judges. National disaster is there presented as a judgment of Jehovah on account of the wickedness of the people. Accordingly we find it repeatedly stated that "the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord; and the Lord delivered them into the hand of Midian,"<sup>2</sup> or the Philistines, or other enemies. On the other hand, deliverance and blessing are presented as acts of Jehovah in recognition of the repentance of the people. "When the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel who delivered them."<sup>3</sup> This vibration between sin and righteousness imparts a unique undulatory movement to all Hebrew history.

**Sources of History.** — The writers of Hebrew history followed the methods of other historians. All history, as will be seen on a moment's reflection, ultimately depends

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 7: 9-11.

<sup>2</sup> Judges 6: 2.

<sup>3</sup> Judges 3: 9.



on testimony or records contemporary with the events described. When the Hebrew historian was not contemporary with the events that he narrated, he naturally made use of oral tradition, official documents, and other earlier writings. This is made evident by an examination of the historical books themselves.

The author of Genesis, whether Moses or some later writer, probably utilized an oral tradition of creation and the flood that Abraham had brought centuries earlier from Babylonia to Canaan. In Hebrew history there are extracts from writings—the book of Jasher and the Wars of the Lord—which are specifically named.<sup>1</sup> The Chronicles of the Kings of Israel and Judah are frequently cited as sources; and documents like Sennacherib's blasphemous letter to Hezekiah<sup>2</sup> and the decrees of Cyrus and Darius<sup>3</sup> in reference to the rebuilding of the temple, were probably taken from the royal archives of Judah and Persia. •

But whatever may be the nature of the material that is used or the sources from which it is taken, the Hebrew historian, with a deep spiritual insight, fitted it into the great religious argument he was constructing. Through it all we discern the agency of Jehovah—the God of righteousness who exacts obedience from His children.<sup>4</sup>

**Interesting Biographies.**—There is, perhaps, no other part of history that is more interesting than biography,

<sup>1</sup> See Josh. 10: 13; 2 Sam. 1: 18; Numb. 21: 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Kings 19: 9-13.

<sup>3</sup> Ezra 6: 1-12.

<sup>4</sup> "The story of the campaign of Chedor-laomer must have been derived from a cuneiform tablet; the story of Joseph seems to have been taken from a hieratic papyrus. The account of the deluge had made its way from Babylonia to Canaan in the days when the culture of Chaldea extended to the Mediterranean. We thus have narratives which presuppose an acquaintance not only with Babylon and Egypt, but also with Babylonian and Egyptian documents."—A. H. SAYCE, "Early History of the Hebrews," p. 130.



which traces the facts of individual life. We have a natural desire to know the lives and characters of the men who have in any way risen above their fellows, and taken a prominent part in great social, political, or religious movements. While great men are in large measure the creatures of mighty movements, they at the same time give direction to historical development. They act as divine agents. There is truth in Carlyle's idea that general history "is at bottom the history of the great men who have worked there."

The Old Testament contains a large number of interesting biographical sketches. They are not, indeed, elaborate studies, but brief outlines of salient facts. They are incidental to the main purpose of Hebrew history. But in many cases they present the facts with sufficient fulness to enable us to form a just estimate of the leading spirits of the Hebrew people. In their treatment there is a singular and surprising impartiality; and the frailties of even the most illustrious characters — Abraham, Moses, David — are not concealed or extenuated.

It is to be noted that in Hebrew biography, as in Hebrew national history, there is a great ethical and religious purpose. We there meet with the same inexorable law, that sin brings suffering and punishment. When Jacob, for example, deceives his father and wrongs his brother, he pays the penalty in fear and flight; when Moses forgets his station and disobeys the divine command, he loses the high privilege of leading his people into the Promised Land;<sup>1</sup> and when David is too indulgent to a favorite son, he is driven from his capital by rebellion and plunged into the woes of bereavement. On the other hand, Hebrew biography teaches, to use the words of the first Psalm,

<sup>1</sup> Numb. 20: 10-12.

that "blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law doth he meditate day and night."

**Hebrew Poetry.**—The essential nature of poetry is the same in all languages. It is fundamentally the literary expression of emotion. It presupposes an exaltation of soul, which sometimes suffuses the objects of nature and the scenes of human life with a beauty and glory of its own, —

"The light that never was on sea or land."

It is this exaltation of soul, in which the feelings are deeply moved, that distinguishes poetry from prose. In the latter the intellect is dominant. When the psalmist breaks forth —

"The heavens declare the glory of God,  
And the firmament showeth His handiwork,"

we realize at once that we are above the realm of prose.

While the essence of poetry is everywhere the same, its form is different. English poetry usually requires both metre and rhyme. The presence of a regular rhythm or metre distinguishes poetry from poetical prose. The principle of Anglo-Saxon poetry is alliteration. In Hebrew literature it is not rhythm or rhyme or alliteration that distinguishes poetry from prose, but *parallelism*, — the repetition of the same thought in different words. Take, for example, the words of Balaam as he stood on the hill overlooking the camp of Israel: —

"How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed?  
And how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?"

For from the top of the rocks I see him,  
And from the hills I behold him :  
Lo, it is a people that dwell alone,  
And shall not be reckoned among the nations.  
Who can count the dust of Jacob,  
Or number the fourth part of Israel?  
Let me die the death of the righteous,  
And let my last end be like his.”<sup>1</sup>

By omitting the alternate or parallel lines — a process that does not alter the sense — this splendid outburst of poetry is turned into prose.

**Variations of Parallelism.** — Hebrew poetry is varied in two ways: (1) by the number of parallel ideas; and (2) by the relation of these ideas. In the example just given, there is a single parallelism, the second line of each couplet corresponding to the first. Sometimes the parallelism is triple or compound; and in that case it gives a stanzaic structure to the poem. The 100th Psalm furnishes a beautiful illustration: —

“Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.  
Serve the Lord with gladness;  
Come before His presence with singing.

“Know ye that the Lord He is God;  
It is He that hath made us, and we are His;  
We are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.

“Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,  
And into His courts with praise;  
Give thanks unto Him, and bless His name.

“For the Lord is good;  
His mercy endureth forever;  
And His faithfulness unto all generations.”

Sometimes there is a double parallelism extending through four lines — a combination that results in quatrain

<sup>1</sup> Numb. 23: 8-10.

verse. Take this example from the third chapter of Proverbs : —

“ My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord ;  
Neither be weary of His reproof ;  
For whom the Lord loveth He reproveth.  
Even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.

“ Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,  
And the man that getteth understanding ;  
For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of  
silver,  
And the gain thereof than fine gold.

“ She is more precious than rubies ;  
And none of the things thou canst desire are to be  
compared unto her ;  
Length of days is in her right hand ;  
In her left hand are riches and honor.”

**Antithetic Parallelism.** — Sometimes the parallelism takes the form of coördination, as in the preceding examples ; at other times it takes the form of antithesis or contrast, one member expressing the idea positively and the other negatively. This antithetic parallelism will be made clear by the following example from the tenth chapter of Proverbs : —

“ A wise son maketh a glad father ;  
But a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother.

“ Treasures of wickedness profit nothing ;  
But righteousness delivereth from death.

“ The Lord will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish ;  
But He thrusteth away the desire of the wicked.

“ He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand ;  
But the hand of the diligent maketh rich.”

**Elaborated Forms.** — By a combination of these various forms of parallelism, Hebrew poetry exhibits a great variety of structure. Sometimes, instead of using couplets or quatrains, the Hebrew poet elaborated his thought through a greater number of lines ; and in this case, the result is an irregular ode-like stanza. The following will serve as an illustration, though forms still more complicated are met with : —

“ A worthless person, a man of iniquity ;  
He walketh with a froward mouth ;  
He winketh with his eyes, he speaketh with his feet,  
He maketh signs with his fingers :  
    Frowardness is in his heart,  
    He deviseth evil continually,  
    He soweth discord.  
Therefore shall his calamity come suddenly ;  
On a sudden shall he be broken, and that without remedy.”<sup>1</sup>

**Preachers of Righteousness.** — The third great division of the Old Testament scriptures is *the prophets*. Their writings form more than a fourth part of the entire collection, — a fact that gives an idea of their importance. Though little read and still less understood, the prophetic books are full of interest and instruction. They are contemporary documents of great historical value ; and the moral and religious principles they embody are applicable to the social and political conditions of the present day.

The prophets were not, as is commonly supposed, foretellers of future events. They were preachers of righteousness, — the bearers of a divine message to a rebellious people. In setting themselves against the iniquitous tendencies of their age, they often assumed the character of reformers, and sometimes suffered cruel persecution.

<sup>1</sup> Prov. 6 : 12-15.

Elijah had to flee from the murderous Jezebel,<sup>1</sup> and the faithful Jeremiah was cast into a dungeon.<sup>2</sup> The prophets were patriotic and courageous men; their vision penetrated beneath the surface of things; and with a strong consciousness of the truth they were proclaiming, they impressively spoke in the name of the Lord. Very often their discourses begin with "thus saith the Lord."<sup>3</sup>

**Style of Discourse.** — The discourses of the prophets are generally brief. The major prophets — Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel — contain many separate discourses, which were delivered at different times, and called forth by different circumstances. Like other orators who appeal to the people, the Hebrew prophets employed all the arts of eloquence. Their earnestness as the conscious representatives of Jehovah suffused their addresses with a large emotional element. Isaiah, for example, begins his prophecy with a bold apostrophe: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken."

Their thought moves on a high level, and their language is often glowing and imaginative. Thus, to the imagination of Isaiah, the advancing hosts of Assyria appear like a tidal wave of the ocean. "Ah, the uproar of many peoples," he exclaims, "which roar like the roaring of the seas; and the rushing of nations, that rush like the rushing of mighty waters. The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters; but He shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the moun-

<sup>1</sup> Kings 19: 1-18.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. 37: 11-21.

<sup>3</sup> "All these men have the consciousness of not acting in their own personal capacities, of not pronouncing the sentiments of their own minds, but as the instruments of a Higher Being, who acts and speaks through them; they feel themselves to be, as Jeremiah expresses it once in a remarkably characteristic verse, 'the mouth of God.'" — CARL HEINRICH CORNILL, "The Prophets of Israel," p. 11.



tains before the wind, and like the whirling dust before the storm. At eventide behold terror; and before the morning they are not." <sup>1</sup>

In their effort to make the truth impressive and effective, they exhaust the resources of figurative speech. They not only use parable and allegory, but they also employ symbolical action. Thus when Ezekiel desired to proclaim the overthrow of Jerusalem, he made a model of the city, and in the presence of the people conducted a mimic siege against it.<sup>2</sup> In like manner Jeremiah, to emphasize the utter destruction of Jerusalem, dashed to pieces a potter's vessel as he spoke. "Thus saith the Lord; even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again."<sup>3</sup>

**Foretelling Events.** — The prophets frequently foretold coming events as impressive warnings. They based their predictions on the character of God who rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. They were keen observers of moral and social conditions; and in pride, dishonesty, and immorality they recognized the signs of national decadence, — the conditions that invited the divine judgments. Thus, in predicting the overthrow of the kingdom of Israel, Hosea says: "Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. There is nought but swearing and breaking faith, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery; they break out, and blood toucheth blood. Therefore shall the land mourn, and every one that dwelleth therein shall languish, with the beasts of the field and the fowls of heaven; yea,

Is. 17: 12-14.

<sup>2</sup> Ezek. 4: 1-3.

<sup>3</sup> Jer. 19: 10, 11.

the fishes of the sea also shall be taken away.”<sup>1</sup> The same principle underlies all the predictions of national disaster found in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the other prophets.

The predictions of coming good or ill were always conditional. As an upright nation might invite disaster by turning to iniquity, so a wicked nation might secure prosperity by turning to righteousness. The people of Nineveh, for example, escaped the doom predicted by Jonah through their prompt repentance. The conditional character of prophecy is clearly set forth by Jeremiah. “At what instant,” says Jehovah, “I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them.”<sup>2</sup>

**Spirit of Hope.** — The prophets were men of strong faith in Jehovah. In a review of the marvellous history of their people and in their surpassing knowledge of the character of God, they found the basis of an inextinguishable hope. Nearly all their predictions of coming disaster to Israel are associated with a promise of blessing. It is their ineradicable belief that God will ultimately rescue His chosen people and make them a blessing to all the nations. “It shall come to pass in the latter days,” says Isaiah, “that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the

<sup>1</sup> Hos. 4: 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. 18: 7-10.

mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge between the nations, and shall reprove many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."<sup>1</sup>

### RESEARCH WORK

An extract from the Wars of the Lord, Numb. 21 : 14, 15.

A song from the book of Jasher, 2 Sam. 1 : 19-27.

The Hebrew spirit in imprecation, Ps. 109; also Ps. 35.

The call of Abraham, Gen. 12 : 1-9.

The call of Moses from the burning bush, Ex. 3.

Reverence for the law instilled and exemplified, Deut. 17 : 18-20; and Ezek. 8.

A poetic contrast between the beauty of nature and the perfection of the divine law, Ps. 19.

Sennacherib's blasphemous letter, 2 Kings 19 : 9-13.

The decrees of Cyrus and Darius, Ezra 6 : 1-12.

Contrasted condition of the righteous man and the wicked, Ps. 1.

An outline sketch of Isaac, Gen. 21-35.

Principal events in the life of Jacob, Gen. 25-49.

A sketch of Joseph's varied career, Gen. 30-50.

An outline of the life of Moses, Ex., Numb., and Deut.

A biographical sketch of Joshua, Josh. 1-24.

The story of Gideon, Judges 6-8.

A sketch of Samson's career, Judges 13-16.

The Life of Samuel, the last of the Judges. 1 Sam. 1-25.

A study of Saul, 1 Sam. 1-31.

A sketch of David's career, 1 Sam. 16-31; 2 Sam.; 1 Kings 1, 2.

The life of Solomon, 1 Kings 1-11.

The career of Jeroboam, 1 Kings 11-14.

The life of Elijah. 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2.

The story of his successor, Elisha, 1 Kings 19-2 Kings 13.

<sup>1</sup> Is. 2 : 2-4.

- A notable psalm of penitence, Ps. 51.
- An example of didactic verse, Prov. 2.
- The persecution of Jeremiah, Jer. 37 : 11-21.
- An arraignment of Jerusalem for its sin, Ezek. 22.
- The corrupt character of the leaders of the people, Hos. 5, 6.
- The brief opening discourse of Isaiah, Is. 1.
- The parable of the vineyard, Is. 5 : 1-7.
- The allegory of the vine, Ezek. 15.
- The destruction of Jerusalem in symbols, Ezek. 4, 5, and 12.
- The conditional character of prophecy, Jer. 18 : 1-12.
- A message of hope, Is. 11, 12.

## CHAPTER V

### SOME STUDIES IN THE PENTATEUCH

**Historical Books.** — The historical books naturally stand at the beginning of the Old Testament. They are seventeen in number,<sup>1</sup> and constitute more than half of the Old Testament writings. They are widely different in character, and, as in Kings and Chronicles, often contain duplicate accounts of the same events; but, as we have seen in previous chapters, they present collectively a pretty full account of Hebrew life.

The authorship and credibility of some of these books have in recent years been much discussed. But, in spite of the conclusions of some recent critics, the historical books of the Old Testament are here regarded as essentially trustworthy documents. Though they may sometimes fail in absolute historical accuracy, though they may in part be composed of earlier documents and in some cases employ oral traditions containing imaginative elements, they are immovably true in their great purpose of exhibiting the agency of God in human, and especially in Hebrew, history. They are rich in their lessons of truth for all time.

**The Pentateuch.** — The first five historical books — Gene-

<sup>1</sup> Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

sis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy — are often called the *Pentateuch*, a Greek word signifying the *fivefold book*. It gives the history of the Hebrew people from the creation of the world to the death of Moses. It contains the Mosaic law, which is given in connection with the Hebrew migration from Egypt. In view of this important element, which lies at the basis of the civil and religious institutions of the Hebrew people, the Pentateuch is frequently referred to as “the law” or “the law of Moses.”

According to the traditional view, the author of the Pentateuch is Moses. Whether he wrote it or not in its present form, it obviously contains Mosaic elements that justify us in associating it with the great lawgiver's name. It is difficult to believe that later Hebrew writers were mistaken in referring to “the law of Moses,”<sup>1</sup> or that a tradition running through Hebrew history for hundreds of years was utterly without foundation. But while we accept, in part at least, the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, we recognize obvious additions by a later hand. Moses could hardly have written the account of his death in the last chapter of Deuteronomy; and the statement made more than once in Genesis that “the Canaanite was then in the land,”<sup>2</sup> was evidently written long after the conquest.

The Mosaic authorship makes the Pentateuch a very old book. According to the usual chronology, it dates from about 1450 B.C. Written by a man “learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians,” it reflects a high degree of culture. There is not so much a creation of new laws as an adaptation of old ones; for seizing upon codes and customs already prevailing in Egypt and Babylonia, Moses

<sup>1</sup> Josh. 8 : 32; 1 Kings 2 : 3; 2 Kings 23 : 25; Ezra 3 : 2; and elsewhere.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 12 : 6; 13 : 7. See also Gen. 36 : 31.



purified and exalted them, and thus made an addition to the ever growing revelation of God to man.<sup>1</sup>

**Genesis.** — A noteworthy unity, as will presently be seen, runs through the whole Pentateuch, which originally formed a single book. Genesis — a Greek word signifying *generation* — makes an appropriate introduction to the following books, and indeed to the entire Old Testament. Without it the rest of the Pentateuch would in large measure be obscure.

Genesis is arranged on a definite plan, a knowledge of which is important for a clear understanding of the book. It consists of two sharply marked but unequal divisions or parts. The first part, which includes the first eleven chapters, is devoted to a very brief sketch of the human race as a whole. Its brevity leaves unfilled many gaps that have given rise to difficult or captious questions. It opens with the sublime statement, carrying us back unmeasured ages, that "in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Then follows the order of creation, the story of the fall, the growing wickedness of the world, the narrative of the flood, and a list of the nations descending from Noah.

The second part of Genesis extends from the beginning of the twelfth chapter to the end of the book. It is concerned not with the history of mankind at large, but with the beginnings of Hebrew history. It tells of Abraham, who

<sup>1</sup> "The Pentateuch substantially belongs to the Mosaic age, and may therefore be accepted as, in the bulk, the work of Moses himself. But it is a composite work, embodying materials of various kinds. Some of these are written documents, descriptive of contemporaneous events, or recording the cosmological beliefs of ancient Babylonia; others have been derived from the unwritten traditions of nomad tribes. The work has passed through many editions; it is full of interpolations, lengthy and otherwise; and it has probably received its final shape at the hands of Ezra." — A. H. SAYCE, "Early History of the Hebrews," p. 134.

is selected to become the founder of the Hebrew race, and of his immediate descendants, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. It is filled with interesting pictures, sometimes romantic and sometimes tragic, of those far-off patriarchal days, ending with glimpses of the mighty kingdom of the Nile.

**A Unique Book.** — It will be recognized that Genesis is a unique book. It presents, in a connected narrative, the beginnings of our race and the progenitors of the Hebrew people.<sup>1</sup> It places back of all things a personal and righteous God. It brings before us in a childlike and concrete form the eternal relations of the Supreme Being to the world, out of which grows the fact that righteousness, whether individual or collective, is in some way attended with blessings, and wickedness is followed by evils.

In the presence of this high truth, which is attested by all history, we may well dismiss the mistaken criticism and injudicious defence, of which Genesis has long been the subject. It matters little whether or not its opening chapters, as is sometimes claimed, contradict the results of science or the researches of archæology. Science and absolute historic fact are apart from its general scope. In its main purpose of revealing the being and providence of God, in the expression of these great truths in delightful incident and story, it remains impregnably true. It presents in varied, concrete form what human experience and philosophic insight recognize to-day as truth.

**Exodus.** — The last chapters of Genesis, as we have seen, end with the migration of Jacob and his family, aggregating seventy souls, into Egypt, where they were

<sup>1</sup> "The Old Testament opens very impressively. In measured and dignified language it introduces the story of Israel's origin and settlement upon the land of Canaan by the story of creation, and thus suggests, at the very beginning, the far-reaching purpose and the world-wide significance of the people and religion of Israel." — JOHN E. MCFADYEN, "Introduction to the Old Testament," p. 3.

assigned a home in the northeastern part of that fertile land. This region, known as the land of Goshen, was nearest to Canaan. Under the blessing of Jehovah, the Hebrew immigrants enjoyed a marvellous prosperity, and gradually passed from their shepherd habits to the higher plane of an agricultural and artisan life. "The children of Israel," says the sacred record, "were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them."<sup>1</sup>

After several centuries the reign of the kindly Hyksos kings was overthrown. "There arose up a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph."<sup>2</sup> Ramses II., as we have seen in a previous chapter, adopted cruel measures to check the increase and power of the Hebrew aliens. He ordered all the male children to be put to death. But the purposes of God cannot be thwarted by the devices of men; and in the fiery trials of their bondage, the Hebrews were forging the bands of national unity and strength.

The story of their bondage and subsequent deliverance is the subject of Exodus, a Greek word meaning *departure*. The hero of this great national movement was Moses, whose rescue by Pharaoh's daughter, as told in the second chapter, contains more than one beautiful touch of nature. Though reared in the royal palace, Moses did not lose his racial sympathy; and when he one day found an Egyptian smiting a Hebrew laborer, he wrathfully slew the cruel taskmaster. This crime led to his flight; and he spent the following forty years in Midian as a shepherd. It was among the wild, inspiring scenes of the mountains of Horeb — scenes that naturally beget a spirit of freedom — that the call of God came to him from the burning bush to become the deliverer of his people.

<sup>1</sup> Ex. 1: 7.

<sup>2</sup> Ex. 1: 8.

**Period of Preparation.** — The book of Exodus, though consisting of a continuous narrative, may be divided, for the sake of clearness, into three parts. The first part, extending from the first to the twelfth chapter, describes the condition of the Hebrews and their preparation for revolt. It contains numerous glimpses of Egypt, which have been illustrated or confirmed by recent discoveries.<sup>1</sup>

When Moses, accompanied by his brother Aaron as chief spokesman, appeared before Pharaoh, and demanded that the Hebrews be permitted to retire to the wilderness to "hold a feast unto the Lord," he was met with a prompt refusal. The king no doubt fathomed and resented the purpose of the two presumptuous or seditious leaders. He felt that the labor of the Hebrew slaves, who had already built great treasure-cities, was too valuable to the state to be willingly surrendered. Then followed in rapid succession nine plagues — the Nile turned to blood, frogs, lice, flies, murrain, boils and blains, hail, locusts, and darkness — which were intended to show the weakness of the Egyptian deities and the vanity of Egyptian worship. But in spite of all these sore visitations, the heart of the king, notwithstanding his promises, remained at the last moment obdurate.

**Departure from Egypt.** — The second part of Exodus, which extends from the twelfth to the nineteenth chapter, describes the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt. The passover had been solemnly celebrated in the homes of the Hebrews. The death-angel had passed over the land, and in every Egyptian household there was mourning over the loss of the first-born. In some way

<sup>1</sup> "The history of Joseph is marvellously true in all its details to what archæology has informed us were the facts of Egyptian life." — A. H. SAYCE, "Early History of the Hebrews," p. 87.

connecting their calamity with the Hebrew bondmen, the Egyptians with one consent urged the departure of the Israelites.

The vast multitude of Hebrews, not less than two millions in number, moved eastward with their flocks and herds to Succoth, not far from the present line of the Suez Canal. Instead of marching directly toward the land of Canaan — a route that would have brought them into contact with the frontier fortresses of Egypt — they turned to the southeast, and encamped on the head waters of the Gulf of Suez. A miraculous pillar of cloud led the Hebrew hosts by day, and by night it was transformed into a pillar of fire.

Meanwhile, divining the purpose of the Hebrews to escape from Egyptian tyranny, Pharaoh hastened in pursuit with a formidable army. When the Hebrews saw themselves caught between the forces of Egypt and the waters of the sea, they were filled with terror; nevertheless, at the command of their brave and confident leader, they moved forward. The waters were driven back by a strong east wind; and along the marvellous highway thus opened to them, the Hebrew armies crossed to the other side. When the heedless Egyptians followed, they were suddenly overwhelmed by the returning waters, and the deliverance of the Hebrew people was accomplished. No wonder that Moses burst forth in a song of martial triumph!<sup>1</sup>

The great throng now proceeded toward Sinai. Their

<sup>1</sup> "What is the Roman arch of triumph, or the pillar crowded with sculpture compared, as a memorial, to the Hebrew song of victory, which, having survived so many ages, is still fresh and vivid as ever, and excites the same emotions of awe and piety, in every breast susceptible of such feelings, which it did so many ages past in those of the triumphant children of Israel?" — H. H. MILMAN, "History of the Jews," vol. I, p. 140.



long march was not without incident. The people suffered for water; and when their supply of food was exhausted, they were marvellously fed on quails and manna. Through the prolonged intercession of Moses, whose hands were upheld by Aaron and Hur, the Hebrews, after a fierce battle, won a signal victory over Amalek. At the suggestion of his father-in-law, Jethro, who visited him in the wilderness, Moses gave the multitude a thorough political organization by the appointment of "rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens."<sup>1</sup>

**At Sinai.** — The third part of Exodus, extending from chapter nineteen to the end of the book, is devoted to the significant events at Sinai. It narrates the imposing circumstances under which the Mosaic law was promulgated, and the special covenant which Jehovah, in continuation of His promise to Abraham, made with the Chosen People. The Ten Commandments and the various civil laws, drawn to a greater or less extent from the institutions of Egypt, are full of interest. It is here that the strange apostasy of the people in their worship of the golden calf — a reminiscence of Egyptian idolatry — is narrated; and here we learn of the construction of the tabernacle or sanctuary, of the munificent offerings of the people for this work, and of the establishment of the Levitical priesthood.

Thus it is evident that Exodus contributes an essential part to the political and religious history of the Hebrew people. From now on, for nearly a thousand years, they are a separate and independent nation.

**Leviticus.** — The book of Leviticus — a word that signifies *pertaining to the Levites* — is a natural continuation

<sup>1</sup> Ex. 18: 21.



of Exodus. At first glance, it might seem an obtrusion that interrupts the historical narrative; but after the tabernacle had been set up, it was fitting to give the laws of sacrifice and the ritual of worship. Leviticus contains the *ceremonial* law, as contrasted with the *moral* law of the Decalogue. It prescribes the various kinds of offerings, the ceremonies relating to purity and impurity, and the several religious festivals that were to be observed. Throughout the book the prophetic or ethical side of religion is entirely subordinate to the priestly or ritual side; hence, Leviticus is sometimes known as the law or code of the priests.<sup>1</sup>

Leviticus may be divided into two parts. The first part, including chapters 1 to 16, is devoted to the fundamental laws of sacrifice, purification, and atonement. The sacrifices were of two kinds, namely, *animal* and *vegetable*, or *bloody* and *unbloody*. There were five principal types of sacrifice—the burnt-offering, the meat-offering, the peace-offering, the sin-offering, and the guilt-offering—which are successively described in the opening chapters.

In chapters 8 to 10, the consecration of the priests and their solemn entry upon their office are narrated. Here we have the tragedy of Nadab and Abihu, brothers of Aaron, who for an act of sacrilege are miraculously consumed by fire. The remaining chapters of part first (11–16) are taken up with the laws of purification and atonement. The distinction is made between clean and unclean animals; directions are given for the diagnosis

<sup>1</sup> "It is the deliberate expression of the priestly mind of Israel at its best, and it thus forms a welcome foil to the unattractive pictures of the priests, which confront us in the pages of the prophets during the three centuries between Hosea and Malachi." — JOHN E. MCFADYEN, "Introduction to the Old Testament," p. 3.

of leprosy; regulations relating to purity and impurity are laid down; and last of all, the solemn services of the day of atonement are prescribed.

**Law of Holiness.**—The latter half of Leviticus (chapters 17-26) is devoted to what has been called "the law of holiness." It prescribes that all animal sacrifices shall be offered at the door of the tabernacle—a regulation that formed a stanch bulwark against idolatry. It prohibits unlawful marriages, and the debasing lusts that were common among the surrounding nations. It condemns the cruel worship of Molech. The twenty-third chapter contains a list of the sacred seasons—the Sabbath, the pass-over, pentecost, the feast of trumpets or New Year, the day of atonement, and the feast of tabernacles—which were to be observed. To these are added, in chapter 25, the seventh or sabbatical year, and after "seven times seven years" the feast of Jubilee, which are associated with some noteworthy civil regulations.

In the next to the last chapter there is a remarkable statement of the divine philosophy that underlies all Hebrew history. "If ye walk in My statutes," Jehovah is represented as saying, "and keep My commandments, and do them, then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit. And your threshing shall reach unto the vintage, and the vintage shall reach unto the sowing time; and ye shall eat your bread to the full, and dwell in your land safely. And I will give you peace in the land, and ye shall lie down, and none shall make you afraid: and I will rid evil beasts out of the land, neither shall the sword go through your land. And ye shall chase your enemies, and they shall fall before you by the sword." On the other hand, a violation of the laws of

Jehovah is to be attended with a corresponding train of evils.

**Numbers.** — The book of Numbers derives its name from the enumeration of the people narrated in the first chapter. It records the journeys of the Hebrews from Sinai to the eastern borders of Canaan. The first ten chapters, which relate chiefly to priestly duties and ceremonies, form a kind of supplement to Leviticus.

The Israelites had now spent about a year at Sinai in the great task of completing their religious and civil administration. The time had come for an advance. Accordingly, "on the twentieth day of the second month in the second year," the cloud rose from the tabernacle, and the well-ordered march of the multitude began. When, after a few days, the people murmured over their monotonous fare, a wind "brought quails from the sea." The sedition of Miriam and Aaron met with a severe rebuke. From the wilderness of Paran spies were prudently despatched into Canaan to ascertain the character of the country. When the spies, except Joshua and Caleb, reported that the land, on account of its walled cities and stalwart population, was impregnable, the Hebrews broke forth in loud complaints. For this exhibition of ingratitude and cowardice, which showed that they had not yet learned to trust Jehovah, they were condemned to perish in the wilderness.

**Subsequent Wanderings.** — Now followed a period of renewed and penitential wandering, which extended through thirty-eight years, and witnessed the death of the murmuring multitude. But few events are narrated of this sorrowful time. The rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram brought a pitiless retribution; for "the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed them up."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Numb. 16: 32.

Finally, as the forty years of wandering drew near an end, the Israelites came to the wilderness of Zin, south of the Dead Sea. Important events followed in rapid succession. Moses and Aaron, by their impatience and disobedience, forfeited the privilege of entering the Promised Land. Aaron met a pathetic end on Mt. Hor. When the king of Edom refused the Israelites passage through his land, they were forced to make a wide circuit around his territory. The difficulties and dangers of this long march excited an outburst of discontent among the people, whereupon "the Lord sent fiery serpents among them."<sup>1</sup>

After a series of victories over Sihon, King of the Amorites, and Og, King of Bashan, the Hebrew host at last arrived on the east side of Jordan, opposite Jericho. Here the interesting events connected with Balaam took place. The Israelites were betrayed into idolatry by "the daughters of Moab," and were mercilessly punished. With the great task of Moses nearly ended, Joshua was formally installed as his successor. After the conquest of the Midianites, the territory east of the Jordan was divided among the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh.<sup>2</sup>

**Deuteronomy.**—The last book of the Pentateuch is called Deuteronomy, or, as the name indicates, a *repetition of the law*. It is so called because it repeats and enforces many of the laws previously given in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. It is made up chiefly of three discourses

<sup>1</sup> Numb. 21: 6.

<sup>2</sup> The book of Numbers "contains the earliest theory or tradition of the Hebrews as to the nomadic period of their history; through it (and other biblical data) the life and fortunes of the Hebrews under Moses before they settled in Canaan must be read, if any attempt is made to read them at all." — GEO. B. GRAY, "Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Numbers," p. xliii.

which Moses, at the end of the forty years' wandering, delivered to the Hebrew people. It contains a large element of exhortation, and breathes a lofty religious spirit, which is reëchoed in the fervent words of the great prophets. It is, therefore, one of the most interesting and edifying books of the Old Testament.

The first four chapters rehearse in brief the history of the people. The discourse ends with an exhortation to obedience, based on the supremacy of God in all the universe. "Know therefore this day," says the great leader and lawgiver, "and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord He is God in heaven above and upon the earth below : there is none else. Thou shalt therefore keep His statutes, and His commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the Lord thy God giveth thee, for ever." <sup>1</sup>

**Second Discourse.** — The second discourse begins with a repetition of the Ten Commandments, which is followed by an exhortation of fervent piety and deep spiritual insight. Its central thought is obedience to God springing from supreme love to Him. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." <sup>2</sup> In view of this love, the idolatry of the surrounding nations is to be sternly avoided. The idolatrous nations are to be exterminated ; for "they will turn away thy sons from following me, that they may serve other gods." <sup>3</sup> Various precepts of the law, sometimes with slight modifications, are repeated, among which may be mentioned the release of the poor every seventh year, the observance of the three great annual festivals —

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 4 : 39, 40.

<sup>2</sup> Deut. 6 : 5.

<sup>3</sup> Deut. 7 : 4.



the passover, pentecost, and tabernacles — and the appointment of six cities of refuge.

**Third Discourse.** — In the third division of Deuteronomy we have the blessings and curses of the law impressively set forth. Ready to depart, Moses once more affectionately and solemnly exhorts the people to obedience. This is the burden of his farewell discourses. "See," he exclaims, "I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil, in that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, and His statutes, and His judgments."<sup>1</sup>

The remainder of the book is occupied with words of encouragement to the people, and particularly to Joshua, with two poems, and an account of the death and burial of Moses on the lonely mountain of Nebo.<sup>2</sup>

**Conclusion.** — As Genesis forms a notable introduction to the Pentateuch; so Deuteronomy forms a no less notable conclusion. The children of Israel now stand upon the verge of their conquest of Canaan. They constitute a well-compacted nation, in which every citizen is a freeman. Their worship of Jehovah, who is adored as God of heaven and earth, distinguishes them from surrounding peoples.<sup>3</sup> The laws by which they are governed include an elaborate ethical and civil code; and under the severe training of the wilderness, the Israelites have attained to

<sup>1</sup> Dent. 30: 15, 16.

<sup>2</sup> "Deuteronomy is one of the epoch-making books of the world. It not only profoundly affected much of the subsequent literature of the Hebrews, but it left a deep and abiding mark upon Hebrew religion, and through it upon Christianity." — JOHN E. MCFADYEN, "Introduction to the Old Testament," p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> "The demand which Jehovah makes upon his people are moral demands. They are continually repeated with the greatest emphasis and earnestness; the transgression of these commandments by the large majority of Israel, especially by the leaders and men of distinction, is the theme of most of the prophetic addresses." — A. KUENEN, "The Religion of Israel," p. 58.



an extraordinary religious development, — a high sense of their position as a divinely chosen people. As Moses sang : —

“ The Lord’s portion is His people ;  
Jacob is the lot of His inheritance.  
He found him in a desert land,  
And in the waste howling wilderness ;  
He compassed him about, He cared for him,  
He kept him as the apple of His eye.” <sup>1</sup>

But more than religious development had been attained. The forty years’ wandering in the wilderness had produced a race of hardy, independent, and fearless men. Their victories over Sihon and Og had kindled their courage. As they stood on the eastern banks of the Jordan, we may well believe that, while a well-founded fear seized upon the tribes of Canaan, the Hebrews were confidently eager for the conquest.

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## RESEARCH WORK

### GENESIS

- The account of creation, Gen. 1, 2.
- The story of the fall, Gen. 3.
- The tragedy of Cain and Abel, Gen. 4 : 1-18.
- The cause and incidents of the flood, Gen. 6-9.
- The call and journey of Abraham, Gen. 12.
- The rescue of Lot, Gen. 14.
- Renewal of the covenant with Abraham, Gen. 17.
- The story of Sodom and Gomorrah, Gen. 18, 19.
- Banishment of Hagar and Ishmael, Gen. 21.
- The offering of Isaac, Gen. 22.
- The death and burial of Sarah, Gen. 23.
- Romantic story of Rebecca, Gen. 24.
- A domestic conspiracy and deception, Gen. 27.

<sup>1</sup> Deut. 32 : 9-10.

- Flight and vision of Isaac, Gen. 28.
- Seven years of loving service, Gen. 29.
- The flight of Jacob, Gen. 31.
- Meeting of Jacob and Esau, Gen. 32, 33.
- Parental partiality and its consequences, Gen. 37.
- Joseph cast into prison, Gen. 39.
- An interpretation of two dreams, Gen. 40.
- Joseph as prime minister of Egypt, Gen. 41.
- Buying corn during a famine, Gen. 42-45.
- Migration of Israel into Egypt, Gen. 46.
- A cruel state policy, Gen. 47 : 13-26.
- A paternal blessing, Gen. 49.

## EXODUS

- The oppression in Egypt, Ex. 1.
- The early life of Moses, Ex. 2.
- The call of Moses, Ex. 3.
- The appointment of Aaron as spokesman, Ex. 4.
- Increased oppression of the Israelites, Ex. 5.
- An interview with the king, Ex. 7.
- The visitation of plagues, Ex. 8-10.
- Institution of the passover, Ex. 12.
- The escape of the Israelites, Ex. 13.
- The passage of the Red Sea, Ex. 14.
- Moses' song of deliverance, Ex. 15.
- The murmuring multitude fed, Ex. 16.
- The defeat of Amalek, Ex. 17.
- The appointment of civil rulers, Ex. 18.
- The giving of the law at Sinai, Ex. 19-24.
- The plan of the tabernacle, Ex. 25-31, 35-40.
- The worship of the golden calf, Ex. 32.

## LEVITICUS

- Various offerings, Lev. 1-7.
- Consecration of Aaron and his sons, Lev. 8, 9.
- The death of Nadab and Abihu, Lev. 10 : 1-7.
- The distinction of clean and unclean animals, Lev. 11.

- Regulations relating to leprosy, Lev. 13, 14.
- The high priest in the holy place, Lev. 16.
- The centralization of sacrifices, Lev. 17.
- Sundry regulations relating to holiness, Lev. 18-22.
- Various religious festivals, Lev. 23.
- The septennial Sabbath and year of Jubilee, Lev. 25.
- A notable exhortation to obedience, Lev. 26.

## NUMBERS

- The numbering of the Israelites, Numb. 1.
- Various Levitical regulations, Numb. 2-9.
- The multitude departs from Sinai, Numb. 10.
- Renewed murmuring and its results, Numb. 11.
- The sedition of Miriam and Aaron, Numb. 12.
- The mission of the spies, Numb. 13.
- Murmuring and condemnation of the Israelites, Numb. 14.
- Rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Numb. 16.
- Anger and disobedience of Moses, Numb. 20.
- Visitation of fiery serpents and the remedy, Numb. 21.
- The story of Balaam, Numb. 22-24.
- Joshua appointed Moses' successor, Numb. 27: 12-23.
- Fierce war against the Midianites, Numb. 31.
- The assignment of land east of the Jordan, Numb. 32.
- Cities of the Levites and of refuge, Numb. 35.

## DEUTERONOMY

- Moses briefly rehearses Israel's history, Deut. 1-3.
- A forcible exhortation to obedience, Deut. 4.
- Repetition and enforcement of sundry laws, Deut. 5-26.
- The tribes on Gerizim and Ebal, Deut. 27.
- Blessings and curses of the law, Deut. 28.
- Words of encouragement, Deut. 31.
- A song of Moses, Deut. 32.
- A poetical blessing of the twelve tribes, Deut. 33.
- The death and burial of the great lawgiver, Deut. 34.

## CHAPTER VI

### FROM THE CONQUEST TO SOLOMON

**Relation to the Pentateuch.** — As we have seen, the Pentateuch records the origin and development of the Hebrew people prior to the conquest of Canaan. It describes the patriarchal age, the protracted sojourn of the Israelites in Egypt, their deliverance from tyrannical oppression, and their weary wanderings on their march to Canaan. It recounts the giving of the moral and ceremonial law, and the gradual organization of the Hebrews into a theocratic commonwealth.

The remaining historical books, which now come under consideration, record a continuation of Hebrew history. They complete the story of Jehovah's dealings with the Chosen People. After the rapid conquest of Canaan, there followed the period of the Judges. At length the monarchy was established under Saul, reached its culmination under David and Solomon, was disrupted under Rehoboam, and then passed into a period of decadence, until at last the Hebrews were carried in captivity to Assyria and Babylonia. After a captivity of seventy years, a part of the people returned under patriotic leaders, and rebuilt the temple and walls of Jerusalem.

In our studies of Hebrew history we must not forget that it is the divine rather than the human element that is made prominent. It sets forth the blessings of righteousness and the evils of iniquity. Kings and courts and state policies are viewed only from the religious side. This

dominant religious purpose of the Hebrew historian makes his records incomplete and fragmentary. His principal aim is to exhibit the continual divine agency in human affairs — an omnipresent factor generally neglected in other historical writings.

**Book of Joshua.** — The book of Joshua, which is named after the heroic leader of the Hebrews, describes the conquest of Canaan and its division by lot among the tribes of Israel.<sup>1</sup> It falls naturally into two well-marked divisions. The first part, including twelve chapters, briefly describes the conquest of the territory west of the Jordan. The second part, extending from the thirteenth to the twenty-second chapter, describes the allotment of land among the various tribes. The book concludes with a brief farewell address by Joshua. It covers a period of about seven years, and leaves many events untouched.

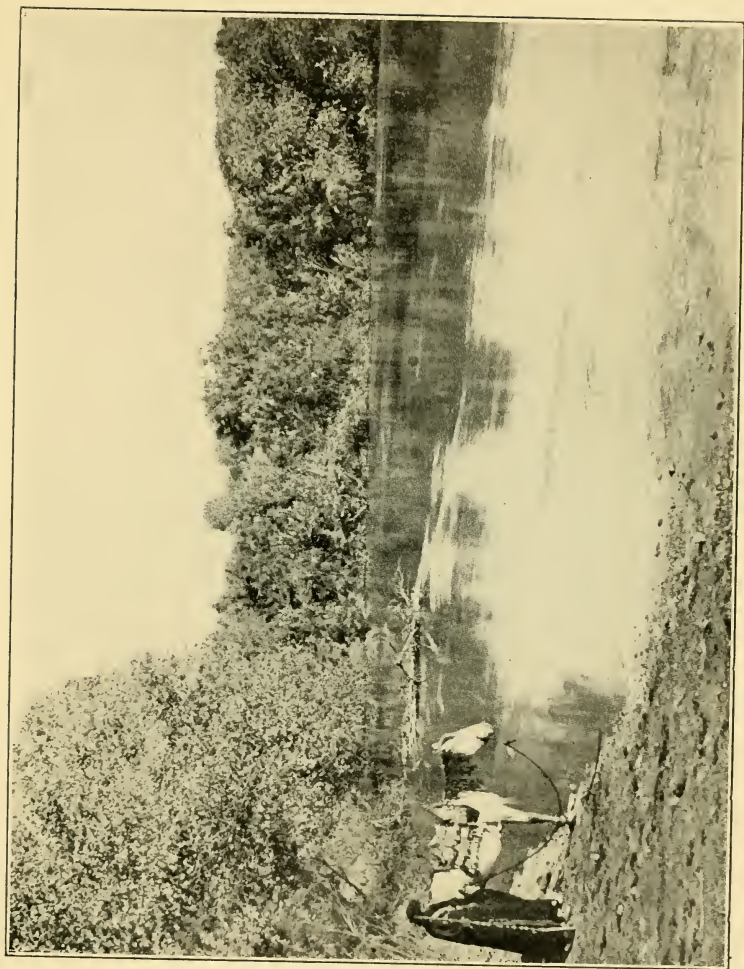
The author of the book is unknown. According to Jewish tradition it was written by Joshua himself. But this can hardly be true; for the book contains references and incidents referring to a later time. The conquest of Hebron, for example, which is related in chapter 15, did not occur till the time of the Judges.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, it contains materials furnished by a contemporary writer, who had crossed the Jordan.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, it is stated that Rahab, who had been saved in the destruction of Jericho, "dwelleth in Israel even unto this day."<sup>4</sup> Whoever the author may have been, it is evident that he wrote in the true prophetic spirit.

<sup>1</sup> "The crossing of the Jordan and the entry into this territory [of Canaan] were destined to become of the utmost importance to mankind. The land of which the shepherd tribes possessed themselves became the arena of great events, so enduring and important in their results, that the country in which they took place became known as the *Holy Land*."—H. GRAETZ, "History of the Jews," p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Judges 1: 12-15.

<sup>3</sup> Josh. 5: 1.

<sup>4</sup> Josh. 6: 25.



RIVER JORDAN





**The Conquest.** — After the death of Moses, Joshua had assumed command of the invading host of Hebrews. After the signal victories on the east of the Jordan, the Hebrew armies were eager to conquer the fairer and more populous districts lying to the west of that famous stream. Though the west Jordanic territory was occupied by many kings and filled with strongly fortified towns, a dread of the victorious Hebrews preceded their invasion.

As a precautionary measure, Joshua despatched two spies to survey the city of Jericho, whose strong position made it the key to the land. The spies were concealed by Rahab, who in return was promised protection in the approaching siege. After the spies had made a favorable report, Joshua prepared to advance. The waters of the Jordan, which were swollen by the spring freshets, divided before the approaching ark, and the Hebrew multitude passed through on dry ground. Joshua established his headquarters at Gilgal; and not unmindful of his dependence on Jehovah, he renewed the rite of circumcision and celebrated the feast of the Passover. Both of these rites had fallen into abeyance during the long period of wandering in the wilderness.

In a short time Jericho was besieged, captured, and destroyed. The trespass of Achan, who had appropriated "a goodly Babylonish garment" and a large amount of silver and gold, led to an unexpected and humiliating defeat. At length Ai was taken by stratagem; and afterwards the blessings and curses of the Mosaic law were solemnly proclaimed on Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Ebal. The Gibeonites entrapped Joshua into a treaty of peace, and for this act of deception were condemned to perpetual bondage. The southern part of Canaan was conquered first; and it was during a severe battle with the Amorites that,

according to a poem in the book of Jasher, Joshua exclaimed : —

“Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon ;  
And thou, Moon, in the valley of Aijalon.  
And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed,  
Until the nation had avenged themselves of their enemies.”

Unfortunately this fine poetic passage has too often been translated into sober prose. The conquest of northern Canaan was practically completed with the defeat of a formidable Canaanitish coalition “at the waters of Merom.”

**Allotment of Land.** — After a war lasting some seven years and the overthrow of thirty-one kings, Joshua found himself complete master of the fertile and populous land of Canaan. The promise made to Abraham centuries before was at last fulfilled. It only remained to assign the conquered territory to the various tribes. To prevent jealousy and murmuring, the distribution was made by lot. Judah occupied the territory between the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean, including Jerusalem, the future capital of the nation. The location of the other tribes is indicated in the accompanying map.

When his work was ended, Joshua, like Moses, delivered a farewell address, and renewed the covenant between the people and God. The discourse has the fine prophetic character of Deuteronomy. It recapitulates the blessings, promises, and threatenings of Jehovah, and ends with a fervent exhortation to obedience. “Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve Him in sincerity and truth : and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt, and serve ye the Lord.”<sup>1</sup>

The deep religious spirit pervading the book of Joshua,

<sup>1</sup> Josh. 24 : 14.

as divided among:  
**THE TWELVE TRIBES**

Statute Miles



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as well as the Hebrew view of the conquest, is well expressed in the 44th Psalm:—

“We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us,  
What work Thou didst in their days, in the days of old.  
Thou didst drive out the nations with Thy hand, and planted them in;  
Thou didst afflict the peoples, and didst spread them abroad.  
For they gat not the land in possession by their own sword,  
Neither did their own arm save them:  
But Thy right hand, and Thine arm, and the light of Thy countenance,  
Because Thou hadst a favor unto them.”

**Judges.** — The book of Judges is named after the rulers whose heroic achievements form its principal theme. These judges were not so much ministers of justice as warriors of heroic spirit, who arose from time to time to deliver the Israelites from heathen oppression. To the mind of the Hebrew historian, they were providential men. “The Lord raised up judges,” he says, “which delivered them out of the hand of those that spoiled them.”<sup>1</sup>

Though tradition ascribes the authorship of the book to Samuel, the writer is not positively known. From the remark that “in those days there was no king in Israel,”<sup>2</sup> it is evident that the book was not composed till after the establishment of the monarchy. As many of the events described occurred two or three centuries earlier, the author must have made use of oral traditions and written documents in arranging his narrative. The chronology is attended with difficulties. Though the successive periods of prosperity and oppression make a total of four hundred and ten years, it is probable that some of the judges were contemporary. In this way the period may be reduced to harmonize with 1 Kings 6: 1, where it is stated that four

<sup>1</sup> Judges 2: 16.

<sup>2</sup> Judges 18: 1.



hundred and eighty years elapsed between the exodus and the building of Solomon's temple.

**Division of the Book.** — The book of Judges is divided into three parts. The first part (chapters 1-3: 6) constitutes an introduction. It supplements the narrative in Joshua, and shows that the conquest was neither so complete nor so thorough as might have been supposed from the statements of the preceding book. Many of the native tribes had been spared; as the sacred writer tells us, "the children of Israel dwelt among Canaanites, Hittites, and Amorites, and Perizzites, and Hivites, and Jebusites: and they took their daughters to be their wives, and gave their daughters to their sons, and served their gods." <sup>1</sup>

This failure relentlessly to exterminate the population of Canaan was in direct contravention of the instruction of Moses in Deuteronomy. The evils that the great law-giver had foreseen were not slow in coming. After the older generation had passed away, and the people had settled down to a comfortable agricultural life, they relaxed in their devotion to Jehovah. "They forsook the Lord God of their fathers," says the narrator, "which brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods, of the gods of the people that were round about them, and bowed themselves unto them, and provoked the Lord to anger." <sup>2</sup> For this apostasy Jehovah withdrew his favor, and "sold them into the hands of their enemies round about them." But when the Hebrews recognized their error and cried unto the Lord, He raised up a succession of heroic deliverers.

**Part Second.** — The second part of Judges (chapters 3: 7-16) narrates the exploits of the dozen leaders who at

<sup>1</sup> Judges 3: 5, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Judges 2: 12.

various times became national heroes and liberators. The history is written in the characteristic Hebrew spirit. Its purpose is not secular knowledge but religious instruction; and hence each narrative of deliverance begins with the statement that "the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord. . . . Therefore the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel; and he sold them into the hand of their enemies. And when the children of Israel cried unto the Lord, the Lord raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel who delivered them." <sup>1</sup>

The first of the judges was Othniel, who delivered the people from the tyranny of a king of Mesopotamia. Ehud broke the oppression of the Moabites by the assassination of their king. The victory of Deborah and Barak was followed by a triumphal song of great exaltation of spirit. Gideon by means of a stratagem overthrew the power of Midian. Through conspiracy and murder Abimelech for a time assumed regal authority. Jephthah gained a decisive victory over the Amorites, and then, in fulfilment of a foolish vow, put his daughter to death. Last of all we have the well-known story of Samson with its strange exhibition of weakness and strength.

**Part Third.** — The third part of Judges (chapters 17–22) is in the nature of an appendix. It relates, first, a bit of private history belonging to the early period of the Judges, and secondly, the story of the civil war that came near

<sup>1</sup> "It is a work of edification. This form, however, is reached by a redactional process, and we are able to distinguish between the material which the editor found ready to hand, and the additions which he made. The substance of the book is a series of stories about Israel's deliverance. They are fitted into a framework which makes them teach the uniform lesson that backsliding from Yahveh is followed by punishment, in the form of war and defeat, while repentance is rewarded by deliverance and victory." — H. P. SMITH, "Old Testament History," p. 87.

exterminating the tribe of Benjamin. Both narratives are valuable for the light they throw on religious and social conditions.<sup>1</sup> It was a time of social degeneracy; a spirit of lawlessness prevailed so that, as the song of Deborah informs us, "the highways were unoccupied and the travellers walked through byways;" in short, "in those days there was no king in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes."<sup>2</sup>

**Book of Ruth.**—The book of Ruth is a charming Hebrew idyll. It gives us delightful glimpses of domestic and social life; and unlike the lawless conditions depicted in parts of the book of Judges, it breathes a beautiful spirit of courtesy, affection, and piety.

The scene of the narrative is laid "in the days when the judges ruled."<sup>3</sup> This statement indicates that the author, who is unknown, lived in the time of the monarchy. The main purpose of the book is to supply the lineage of David; it could, therefore, hardly have been written before that monarch's accession to the throne.

The main facts of the book, which possesses the interest of a romance, are well known. Elimelech, a citizen of Bethlehem, is led by a famine to remove, with his wife Naomi and his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, to the land of Moab. He dies there; and his two sons marry Moabitish wives named Orpah and Ruth. After a time Mahlon and Chilion die, and Naomi is left alone with her two daughters-in-law. On learning that the famine is broken in

<sup>1</sup> "It was a period of anarchy and perpetual war. Without a head, and without cohesion, it seems strange that the Hebrews did not perish utterly or become absorbed by the older population of the land. That the nation should have survived, admits of only one explanation. It possessed a common faith, a common sanctuary, and a common code of sacred laws."—A. H. SAYCE, "Early History of the Hebrews," p. 272.

<sup>2</sup> Judges 17: 6.

<sup>3</sup> Ruth 1: 1.

Judah, Naomi resolves upon returning to Bethlehem, but urges her daughters-in-law to remain in their own country. Orpah follows her mother-in-law's advice; but Ruth expresses her determination to accompany Naomi. "Whither thou goest," she says affectionately, "I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God."

After the return of the two women to Bethlehem, Ruth makes the acquaintance of her kinsman Boaz, "a mighty man of wealth," and finally becomes his wife. The fruit of this union was a son, tenderly cherished by Naomi and destined to be the progenitor of the royal line of Judah. "They called his name Obed; he is the father of Jesse, the father of David."<sup>1</sup> It is a significant fact that a Moabite woman should be incorporated into the most distinguished genealogical line of Israel, — a promise of the day when the Gentile world was to share the faith of the Hebrew people.

**1 and 2 Samuel.** — Among the ancient Jews 1 and 2 Samuel constituted a single book. The division was made by the Greek translators of the Septuagint as a matter of convenience; accordingly, the first book closes with the death of Saul, and the second book is devoted to David. The work is not inappropriately named after Samuel, who is the central figure in its earlier events.

The author of 1 and 2 Samuel is not known, nor can the time when the books were written be definitely fixed. They were evidently composed after the death of David, for, in 2 Samuel 5:5, we find that the entire length of his reign is given. They appear to have been written after the division of the kingdom and before the capture of Jerusalem; hence, according to the usual chronology, be-

<sup>1</sup> Ruth 4:17.

tween 976 and 588 B.C. This is the natural conclusion from 1 Samuel 27:6, in which the writer tells us that the Philistine prince Achish gave Ziklag to David, and then adds, "wherefore Ziklag pertaineth unto the kings of Judah unto this day." But whatever the date, the sacred author probably had access to the contemporary documents mentioned in 1 Chronicles 29:29, namely, "the book of Samuel the seer, and the book of Nathan the prophet, and the book of Gad the seer," which contained "the acts of David the king."

**Divisions of the Book.** — The books of Samuel, which form a continuation of Judges, may be conveniently divided into three parts. The first part, including chapters 1 to 7, narrates the history of Israel under its last two great judges, Eli and Samuel. It describes the birth and education of Samuel, the disorders arising from the wickedness of Eli's ill-governed sons, the invasion of the land by the Philistines, the capture of the ark of the Lord, the misfortunes it brought upon the Philistine cities, the manner in which after seven months it was returned to Israel, and finally the overthrow of the Philistine army under the administration of Samuel. All this is merely introductory to the more important events that are narrated in the rest of the books.

The second part, extending through the remainder of the first book, describes the establishment of the monarchy and the career of the first king. It is filled with stirring events. The people had long felt the inadequacy of the government of local judges; and when Samuel's sons showed themselves unscrupulous and self-seeking men, the people made a formal demand upon Samuel for the appointment of a king. Samuel reluctantly yielded assent. Accordingly Saul was anointed as the first king of Israel;



and after the defeat of the Ammonites, the previous lukewarm attitude of many of the people was transformed into an enthusiastic support.

But Saul lacked the elements of a great ruler ; and after repeated acts of transgression, he was rejected, and David was anointed in his stead. After David had become a popular hero by the slaying of the Philistine champion Goliath, Saul became insanely jealous ; and a large part of the remaining chapters of 1 Samuel are taken up with the king's efforts to have his imaginary enemy captured and slain. At length, desperate and forsaken of the Lord, Saul was defeated in battle, and threw himself upon his own sword.

**The Second Book.** — The third part includes the whole of 2 Samuel. It gives the history of David's reign, during which the Hebrew monarchy reached the culmination of its power. His reign began with civil war ; but after the death of Ishbosheth, whom Abner had set up as a rival king, David became the acknowledged sovereign of all Israel and established his capital at Jerusalem. In narrating the important events of David's reign, the sacred historian exhibits great impartiality of judgment ; and accordingly he tells of the king's outrageous crimes as well as of his brilliant victories over the surrounding nations. Notwithstanding the wide extent of his regal power, David's life was saddened by domestic tragedies, among which the most crushing was the rebellion and death of his favorite son Absalom. His brilliant but troubled reign covered a period of forty years.

**Noteworthy Poems.** — The books of Samuel contain several noteworthy poems, which are interesting both for the occasion inspiring them and for the lofty Hebrew spirit embodied in them. The first is the exultant song of



Hannah, the mother of Samuel, in which a strong, triumphant faith finds expression : —

“ They that strive with the Lord shall be broken to pieces ;  
Against them shall He thunder in heaven :  
The Lord shall judge the ends of the earth ;  
And He shall give strength unto the king,  
And exalt the horn of His anointed.” <sup>1</sup>

The second poem is called the Song of the Bow, which the compiler of 1 and 2 Samuel extracted from the book of Jasher. It is David's elegy over Saul and Jonathan, to the latter of whom he pays a tender tribute : —

“ I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan ;  
Very pleasant hast thou been unto me ;  
Thy love to me was wonderful,  
Passing the love of women.” <sup>2</sup>

The song of thanksgiving in the twenty-second chapter of 2 Samuel abounds in sublime description. It is repeated with some variations in the 18th Psalm. The poem at the beginning of the twenty-third chapter is said to contain the last words of David, in which “ the sweet psalmist of Israel ” recognizes the divine presence in his life : —

“ The spirit of the Lord spake by me,  
And His word was upon my tongue.”

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## RESEARCH WORK

### JOSHUA

The mission and report of the spies, Josh. 2.  
The marvellous passage of the Jordan, Josh. 3.  
The memorials of the crossing, Josh. 4.  
The capture of Jericho, Josh. 6.  
The defeat at Ai, and Achan's sin, Josh. 7.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. 2 : 10.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Sam. 1 : 26.

- The capture of Ai, Josh. 8.
- The craft and punishment of the Gibeonites, Josh. 9.
- War with five kings, Josh. 10.
- The location of the various tribes, Josh. 13-19.
- The cities of refuge, Josh. 20.
- Joshua's farewell addresses, Josh. 23, 24.

## JUDGES

- Further wars of conquest, Judges 1.
- Wickedness of the next generation, Judges 2.
- The exploits of the first three judges, Judges 3.
- The work of Deborah and Barak, Judges 4.
- Their song of triumph, Judges 5.
- The story of Gideon, Judges 6-8.
- The conspiracy of Abimelech, Judges 9.
- The story of Jephthah, Judges 11, 12.
- The career of Samson, Judges 13-16.
- The introduction of idolatry, Judges 17, 18.
- Crime and civil war, Judges 19-21.

## RUTH

- The story of Ruth in detail, Ruth 1-4.

## 1 AND 2 SAMUEL

- Hannah's song of thankfulness, 1 Sam. 2: 1-10.
- The story of Eli and his sons, 1 Sam. 2: 12-4: 18.
- The ark among the Philistines, 1 Sam. 4-6.
- Samuel as judge of Israel, 1 Sam. 7.
- The Israelites ask for a king, 1 Sam. 8.
- Saul anointed and established as king, 1 Sam. 9-11.
- Various incidents in Saul's reign, 1 Sam. 13-16.
- The duel of David and Goliath, 1 Sam. 17.
- Friendship of David and Jonathan, 1 Sam. 18, 19.
- The king's violent jealousy, 1 Sam. 18-22.
- David spares Saul in a cave, 1 Sam. 24.
- Incident with Nabal, 1 Sam. 25.

- Saul and the witch of Endor, 1 Sam. 28.  
Death of Saul, 1 Sam. 31.  
David's lament over Saul and Jonathan, 2 Sam. 1 : 19-27.  
Civil war between David and Ishbosheth, 2 Sam. 2-4.  
Jerusalem made the capital city, 2 Sam. 5.  
The ark of the Lord brought to Jerusalem, 2 Sam. 6.  
David's purpose to build a temple, 2 Sam. 7.  
War with the Ammonites, 2 Sam. 10.  
Infamous conduct of David, 2 Sam. 11, 12.  
Domestic crime and sorrow, 2 Sam. 13, 14.  
The conspiracy of Absalom, 2 Sam. 15-18.  
Amasa murdered by Joab, 2 Sam. 20 : 4-13.  
A psalm of thanksgiving by David, 2 Sam. 22.  
David's farewell poem, 2 Sam. 23 : 1-7.  
The punitive visitation of the plague, 2 Sam. 24.

## CHAPTER VII

### FROM SOLOMON TO THE RESTORATION

**1 and 2 Kings.** — Like 1 and 2 Samuel, the two books of Kings originally formed a single volume. They contain a sketch of the Hebrew monarchy from the accession of Solomon to the overthrow of the kingdom of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. They extend over a period of 427 years; or, if we include the mention of Jehoiachin's elevation by Evil-Merodach, we must add about twenty-six years more. Hebrew history is thus brought down to about 562 B.C.

The author of 1 and 2 Kings is not certainly known. By tradition the authorship has been assigned to Jeremiah or Ezra. But whoever the compiler may have been, he adopted the prevailing Hebrew or Deuteronomic view of history. Accordingly, he traced national well-being to loyalty to Jehovah, and national disaster to the worship of idols. The standpoint of the writer is clearly shown in the divine words addressed to Solomon: "If thou wilt walk before Me, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep My statutes and My judgments: then will I establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel forever. But if ye shall at all turn from following Me, ye or your children, and will not keep My commandments, and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 9:4, 5.

**Sources and Treatment.** — The author wrote during the seventy years' captivity or later. Thus many of the events he narrates occurred centuries before his time. Like other writers, both sacred and profane, he made use of earlier works and contemporary documents, which he nearly always names. For additional facts about the reign of Solomon, he refers to the book of the Acts of Solomon. In treating of the rulers of the northern kingdom, he frequently mentions the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel as his authority; and in discussing the rulers of the southern kingdom, he refers fifteen times to the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah. These chronicles were the official records, or works based on them, prepared by the royal recorder or historian.

But the compiler makes only brief extracts from the larger works, and arranges them in an order or scheme to demonstrate his main contention—true now as then—that righteousness exalts a nation, and iniquity debases it. Whenever a king “did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah,” he was prosperous in his reign; and whenever he did evil, he met with disaster. It is remarkable that all the kings of Israel are pronounced evil; and of the kings of Judah only a few—Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah—command the approval of the pious historian.<sup>1</sup>

**Threefold Division.** — The books of Kings naturally fall into a threefold division. The first eleven chapters are devoted to the reign of Solomon, and present to us his wisdom and power and final lapse into idolatry. There are

<sup>1</sup> The writer's “aim is to apply to the past history of his race, from the time of Solomon and onward to his own day, the Deuteronomic standard, and to exemplify the view that prosperity is to be traced to a faithful regard for this standard, failure and catastrophe to its deliberate repudiation.”—C. B. BARNEY in Hasting's “Dictionary of the Bible.”

not a few interesting details. His choice of "an understanding heart" rather than happiness or power, displays a royal soul. His decision in the case of the contending women has become famous. His building of the temple was a fine exhibition of wisdom and piety; and the splendor of his court and the extent of his commerce surrounded him with a magnificence which no other Hebrew monarch ever enjoyed.

The second part, extending from the twelfth chapter of 1 Kings to the seventeenth chapter of 2 Kings, relates the history of the divided kingdom. Rehoboam's insolence and folly led to a revolt of ten tribes under Jeroboam, who, as a matter of state policy, introduced an idolatrous worship. The evil results were seen in all his successors. The fearless words and deeds of Elijah and his successor, Elisha, were not able to stay the flood of iniquity. The climax of wickedness was reached under Ahab and Jezebel. At length, after 387 years, the kingdom of Israel was destroyed by the Assyrian monarch Sargon (722 B.C.), who captured Samaria and replaced the deported population by colonists from the east. During all this time the history of the kingdom of Judah is carried along with that of the kingdom of Israel, and the contemporaneous sovereigns are always given.

The third part of the books of Kings includes the last eight chapters. It is devoted to an outline history of the kingdom of Judah after its rival of the north had been destroyed. The most notable event is the discovery of the book of the law in the temple during the reign of Josiah, and the thorough-going religious reform which he inaugurated. But in spite of his efforts and the piety of his predecessor Hezekiah, whose life was miraculously lengthened, the Hebrew people as a whole had broken



the covenant of Jehovah. By their irreclaimable idolatry and wickedness, they finally forfeited the favor of the Lord, and in 588 B.C. — one hundred and thirty-four years after the destruction of Samaria — Jerusalem fell a prey to the conquering power of Nebuchadnezzar. The Hebrews were carried away into a long captivity; the threatened wrath of Jehovah had fallen upon His people.

**1 and 2 Chronicles.** — The books of Chronicles, together with Ezra and Nehemiah, originally formed a single book. It is noteworthy that the last two verses of the Chronicles are identical with the first two verses of Ezra. The present division of this continuous historical record dates from the Septuagint version, which was made two or three centuries before our era.

The traditional view ascribes the authorship to Ezra; but from the list of the descendants of Zerubbabel mentioned in 1 Chronicles 3: 19–22, — the leader of the first body of captives returning to Jerusalem from Babylon, — it seems probable that the writer belongs to a later time. Some biblical scholars place the author as late as 330 B.C., a date subsequent to the time when Alexander had started on his conquering career in western Asia. At all events, it is perfectly clear that the book was written after the Babylonian exile; for it contains the proclamation of Cyrus for the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

**Character and Sources.** — In the Chronicles, as in the other historical writings of the ancient Hebrews, prosperity is represented as a reward of righteousness, and adversity as a punishment of sin. Accordingly, David admonishes Solomon to be faithful to Jehovah: "If thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off forever."<sup>1</sup> And when a king

<sup>1</sup> 1 Chron. 28: 9.

of Judah meets with disaster, it is ascribed to the fact that he "forsook the law of the Lord."

The Chronicles briefly cover the period extending from Adam to the restoration of the Jews in Jerusalem. The author was therefore dependent on previous and, in many cases, ancient records.<sup>1</sup> He drew freely from the earlier historical books of the Old Testament, especially from Samuel and Kings; but in addition to these works, he makes mention of a small library of sources, which are now unhappily lost. Among these new sources may be mentioned the book of the Kings of Israel and Judah (2 Chron. 16: 11), Commentary of the book of the Kings (2 Chron. 24: 27), the book of Samuel the Seer, the book of Nathan the Prophet, the book of Gad the Seer (1 Chron. 29: 29), the Prophecy of Ahijah, and the Visions of Iddo the Seer (2 Chron. 9: 29).

**Distinctive Features.**—The books of Chronicles have a few distinctive features, which it is important to note. First of all, there are nine chapters devoted to genealogies. These were taken, as we are told, from the book of the Kings of Israel,<sup>2</sup> and were no doubt useful, not only in reminding the returning exiles of the antiquity of their race, but also in assigning them a proper place in the land of Canaan.

A second peculiarity is the prominence given to the temple service. The writer, whoever he was, appears to have been a priest or Levite,—a fact that seems to have given a priestly aim or bias to his work. The whole of

<sup>1</sup> "His belief in God was intense, as one actively governing the world, punishing the evil and rewarding the good, demanding obedience and worship, but long-suffering and gracious to His people in spite of their sin. There is at times something mechanical in His conception, but it is strong and effective."—FRANCIS BROWN in Hastings' "Dictionary of the Bible."

<sup>2</sup> 1 Chron. 9: 1.

chapter 6 is devoted to Levitical genealogy; and many chapters are given to the temple and its services. In addition to this, the chronicler makes prominent the reformatory labors of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, making mention of Passover services not elsewhere referred to.

The third distinguishing feature of the books of Chronicles is the prominence given to the kingdom of Judah. The kingdom of Israel receives only occasional mention, and then in connection with its rival kingdom. The reigns of the good kings — those who did “that which was right in the sight of the Lord” — are made especially prominent. Saul is dismissed with brief notice; and in the lengthy sketch of David there is no mention of his adulterous crimes. Solomon’s idolatry is passed over in silence. “The object of the writer,” as Dillmann well says, “was not so much to retell the story of Israel, as, from the rich historical stores at his command, to select those portions which related more particularly to the history of worship, in order to demonstrate to his compatriots how precious this legacy was, and how fundamental to the existence and prosperity of the new state arising from the ashes of the old.”

**Fourfold Division.** — The books of Chronicles may be readily divided into four parts. The first part (chapters 1–9) contains the genealogical lists. The second part (chapters 10–29) narrates the history of David, dwelling in particular upon his preparation for the building of the temple and his arrangements for maintaining its public service. The third part (2 Chron. 1–9) tells the history of Solomon, making prominent the building and dedication of the temple. The fourth part, including the rest of the book, is occupied with the history of Judah from the division of

the kingdom under Rehoboam to the destruction of Jerusalem and Cyrus' permission for the rebuilding of the temple.

**Ezra.** — The books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which narrate the most important events connected with the restoration of the Jews to their native land, formerly constituted one work. They are simply a continuation of the narrative begun in Chronicles, to which they bear a striking resemblance in style and spirit. There can be little doubt that all four books are the work of a single historian or compiler. Ezra and Nehemiah are our only sources for an important period of Jewish history; and without the information they supply, the subsequent developments in the life of the Hebrew people would be unintelligible.

The seventy years' captivity had accomplished one notable result. It permanently cured the Jews of their fatal tendency to idolatry. We hear no more of the worship of Baal or other heathen divinities; henceforth they are loyal in their outward observance of the Mosaic law.

**Twofold Division.** — The book of Ezra is divided into two parts. The first part, consisting of chapters 1 to 6, describes the return of 42,360 Jews to Jerusalem. This movement, led by Zerubbabel, followed a favorable proclamation by Cyrus (536 B.C.). The rebuilding of the temple, which had been interrupted by a decree of Artaxerxes, was completed a little later under Darius (516 B.C.), and dedicated with magnificent ceremonies.

The second part, which begins with chapter 7, describes the return and administration of Ezra, who is characterized as "a ready scribe in the law of Moses." It is separated from the events of the preceding chapter by about sixty years. As a Jew of zealous piety, Ezra lamented the intermarriages of his people with surrounding nations;

and accordingly he started an agitation that led to the putting away of "strange wives."

**Nehemiah.**—The book of Nehemiah continues the history of the restoration of the Jews and the rebuilding of Jerusalem. It is named after the pious and patriotic leader, who gave up his honorable post as cupbearer to Artaxerxes I., King of Persia, to undertake the arduous labor of rebuilding the walls of the sacred city. The events narrated in this book took place some twelve or fourteen years after the mission of Ezra.

Nehemiah rallied the rulers of the Jews at Jerusalem to a cordial coöperation. Though he was opposed by envious enemies, he heroically persisted in his work. For fear of attack, his workmen wielded the trowel with their swords girded at their sides. He persuaded the wealthy citizens of Jerusalem to surrender their claims against their poorer brethren, and thus deliver them from the oppression of debt. In fifty-two days he accomplished the great work of restoring the fallen walls of the city.

The next important event narrated in Nehemiah (chapters 8–10) is the solemn reading of the law by Ezra. The people recognized their sin; and "entered into a curse, and into an oath, to walk in God's law, and to observe and do all the commandments of the Lord our Lord, and His judgments and His statutes."<sup>1</sup> Afterwards Nehemiah instituted various religious and social reforms, and gave to revived Judaism the zealous and exclusive spirit which it was long to retain.

**Esther.**—The book of Esther possesses the interest of a historical romance. The author is unknown; but the incidents, which are drawn in part at least from the Chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia,<sup>2</sup> are handled

<sup>1</sup> Neh. 10: 29.

<sup>2</sup> Esther 10: 2.



with consummate art. When Racine came to fashion the story into a masterful drama, he had no occasion to change its essential features or arrangement. Esther is at once a queenly and heroic character.<sup>1</sup>

The facts narrated in Esther may be regarded as an episode in Hebrew history. The evident purpose of the book is to explain the origin of the Jewish feast of Purim. The scene is at Susa, the capital of Persia. Esther, a Jewish maiden of fascinating personality, was selected as queen in place of Vashti, whom the wilful and despotic Ahasuerus had deposed for disobeying the royal mandate. In her exalted position, the new queen overthrew the prime minister, Haman, whose wicked plottings had aimed at the destruction of the Jews throughout the vast extent of the Persian empire. It was in commemoration of the escape of the Jews from this threatened destruction that the feast of Purim was instituted.

**Peculiar Features.** — In several respects Esther differs from every other book in the Old Testament. We miss that strong sense of the divine agency which is elsewhere usually made so prominent. It is a remarkable fact that the name of God is not once mentioned. Moreover, it presents the Jewish character in an unfavorable light; for the decree of Mordecai, as well as the slaughter by the Jews, breathes a spirit of national hate and revenge. Yet a characteristic Hebrew faith underlies the work; for, without specifically stating the fact, the book undoubtedly presents the deliverance of the Jews as the act of a favoring Providence.

<sup>1</sup> "One has, it seems to me, but to read this story to feel the life of a romance in it. The contrasted characters — the sensual monarch, the unscrupulous minister, the proud Puritan, the brave woman, brave with true womanly courage — are drawn in few lines, but with marvellous skill." — LYMAN ABBOTT, "Life and Literature of the Ancient Hebrews," p. 191.



**Historic Interest.** — The book is not without a general historical interest. Ahasuerus, the king of Persia, is usually identified with Xerxes (485-465 B.C.); and the capricious and self-indulgent temper of the monarch, as depicted in Esther, corresponds to his character as presented in Herodotus. The description of Persian customs is regarded as accurate. The Jews who had been carried away to the East by Assyrian and Babylonian conquerors — most of whom never returned to Canaan — are represented as retaining their distinctive national customs and exclusiveness. "There is a certain people," so Haman tells Ahasuerus, "scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's law."<sup>1</sup>

The book of Esther has given rise to much discussion. There are some biblical scholars who question its right to a place in the sacred canon. But the book has always been held in high honor by the Jews; and for its literary art and general historic interest, as well as for its underlying religious faith, we may well be thankful that it has been retained in the Old Testament collection of writings.

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## RESEARCH WORK

### I AND 2 KINGS

The circumstances of Solomon's appointment as king, 1 Kings 1.

The final charge and death of David, 1 Kings 2: 1-11.

The punishment of various evil-doers, 1 Kings 2: 12-46.

The celebrated choice of Solomon, 1 Kings 3: 5-15.

His famous judgment between two women, 1 Kings 3: 16-28.

The magnificent court of Solomon, 1 Kings 4.

<sup>1</sup> Esther 3: 8.

- His relations with Hiram of Tyre, 1 Kings 5.
- The building of the temple, 1 Kings 6.
- Other works of architecture, 1 Kings 7.
- The formal dedication of the temple, 1 Kings 8.
- The visit of the queen of Sheba, 1 Kings 10.
- The closing years of Solomon's reign, 1 Kings 11.
- Revolt of the ten tribes under Jeroboam, 1 Kings 12.
- Reign of Jeroboam, 1 Kings 13, 14.
- The story of Elijah, 1 Kings 17-19; 2 Kings 1.
- The criminal seizure of Naboth's vineyard, 1 Kings 21.
- The story of Elisha, 2 Kings 1-9.
- The healing of Naaman, the leper, 2 Kings 5.
- Destruction of Baal worshippers by Jehu, 2 Kings 10: 18-28.
- The wicked reign of Athaliah, 2 Kings 11.
- Overthrow of the kingdom of Israel, 2 Kings 17.
- Notable reign of Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18-20.
- Finding the book of the law, 2 Kings 22.
- Religious reform under Josiah, 2 Kings 23.
- The overthrow of Jerusalem, 2 Kings 24, 25.

#### 1 AND 2 CHRONICLES

- Various genealogies, 1 Chron. 1-9.
- A brief account of Saul, 1 Chron. 10.
- The career of David, 1 Chron. 11-22.
- Elaborate provision for the temple services, 1 Chron. 23-26.
- Solomon's choice of wisdom, 2 Chron. 2.
- The construction of the temple, 2 Chron. 2, 3.
- Solomon's prayer at the dedication, 2 Chron. 6: 12-42.
- Other religious ceremonies, 2 Chron. 7.
- Visit of the queen of Sheba, 2 Chron. 9: 1-12.
- Revolt of the ten tribes, 2 Chron. 10.
- Reign of Rehoboam, 2 Chron. 11, 12.
- Reign and reforms of Asa, 2 Chron. 15, 16.
- Righteous reign of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. 17-20.
- The cruelty and death of Athaliah, 2 Chron. 22, 23.
- The religious reforms of Hezekiah, 2 Chron. 29-31.
- His relations with Sennacherib, 2 Chron. 32.
- The upright reign of Josiah, 2 Chron. 34, 35.
- The fall of Jerusalem, 2 Chron. 36.

## EZRA

- The proclamation of Cyrus and its results, Ezra 1, 2.
- The rebuilding of the temple, Ezra 3.
- Opposition and delay, Ezra 4.
- The completion of the temple, Ezra 5, 6.
- Ezra's visit to Jerusalem, Ezra 7, 8.
- Religious reforms inaugurated by Ezra, Ezra 9, 10.

## NEHEMIAH

- Nehemiah's removal to Jerusalem, Neh. 1, 2.
- The rebuilding of the walls, Neh. 3, 4.
- A social reform relieving the poor, Neh. 5.
- The plottings of enemies, Neh. 6.
- A religious revival, Neh. 8, 9.
- Distribution of the returning Jews, Neh. 11.
- Religious reforms, Neh. 13.

## ESTHER

- The feast of Ahasuerus or Xerxes, Esther 1.
- The Jewish maiden chosen queen, Esther 2.
- The vengeful decree obtained by Haman, Esther 3.
- The queen agrees to attempt a rescue, Esther 4.
- The king and Haman at a banquet, Esther 5.
- The reward of Mordecai, Esther 6.
- Haman hanged on his own gallows, Esther 7.
- The Jews defend themselves, Esther 8, 9.
- Institution of the feast of Purim, Esther 9: 20-32.

## CHAPTER VIII

### STUDIES IN THE POETICAL BOOKS OF JOB AND PSALMS

**Introduction.** — The principle of Hebrew poetry, which is found in a varied parallelism, has been considered in a previous chapter. We now enter upon a study of the distinctly poetical books, which include Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon. The ancient Hebrew race did not produce a great epic. It did not create a theatre for the representation of dramatic masterpieces; yet it produced a moral drama that deserves to be compared with the greatest literary productions of antiquity. Its didactic poetry embodies deep practical wisdom, while its lyrical verse is to-day a source of delight and spiritual strength to multitudes in Europe and America.

The poetic literature of the ancient Hebrews reveals to us a new aspect of their life and culture. For the most part their poetry is of a deep religious tone; yet the religion embodied in it is chiefly spiritual. In place of the external and ritual ceremonies of the tabernacle and temple, we find the soul of the sacred poet standing in close personal relations with his Maker. Without the intervention of a mediating priesthood, he boldly says, as in the 23d Psalm: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth me beside the still waters."

Furthermore, the literary culture and art exhibited in the poetry of the Old Testament is surprising. Its sustained excellence of thought and its admirable artistic form must be regarded as the fruitage of a long period of

intellectual development. It was no sudden growth; it sprang from a vigorous culture that was rooted for centuries in Babylonian and Egyptian civilization.

**The Book of Job.** — The book of Job, though not intended for representation on the stage, is nevertheless a dramatic poem. It has its *dramatis personæ*; namely, the patriarch hero after whom the work is named, his three well-meaning but narrow-minded friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar; the young, gifted, and irrepressible Elihu; and last of all the Lord Himself, who sublimely speaks from the midst of a whirlwind. In place of outward action, we have the movement of thought, and the excitement and conflict of debate.

The book is devoted to a discussion of the great problem of human suffering in its relation to God's government of the world. We are constantly astonished at the sweep of knowledge, particularly of natural phenomena, which the speakers in turn display. The drama is recognized by the ablest critics as a masterpiece of human genius.<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, in characteristic phrase, calls it "a noble book; all men's book! It is our first, oldest statement of the never ending problem,—man's destiny, and God's ways with him here in this earth. And all in such free, flowing outlines; grand in its sincerity, in its simplicity; in its epic melody, and repose of reconciliation."<sup>2</sup>

**General Outline.** — Though there are minor points of difficulty in the arrangement of the book, its general plan is very simple. It consists of five parts as follows: —

<sup>1</sup> "Job, like Spenser, should be the poet of poets; but though Goethe has imitated him in royal fashion, and here and there other poets such as Dante may offer allusions, yet Milton is the only poet who seems to have absorbed Job. "Paradise Regained" is in both form and contents a free imitation of the book of Job."—T. K. CHEYNE, "Job and Solomon; or, the Wisdom of the Old Testament," p. 112.

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle, "Heroes and Hero-Worship," Sect. 2.

1. The prologue in prose (chapters 1, 2).
2. The debate of Job and his three friends in poetic form (chapters 3-31). This discussion is divided into three rounds or cycles (chapters 3-14; 15-21; 22-31).
3. The interjected discourses of Elihu in poetic form (chapters 32-37).
4. The discourses of Jehovah in poetic form (chapters 38-42).
5. The epilogue in prose, recounting the subsequent prosperity of Job.

In the prologue, the hero, Job, is presented as a man of extraordinary piety, whose faithfulness is commended by Jehovah Himself. When Satan, in a celestial council, sneeringly suggests that Job's piety springs from a calculating selfishness, he receives permission of the Lord to deprive the patriarch of prosperity and happiness. The response of the heroic saint to the swift succession of disasters that rob him of his riches and his children is found in the sublime words of resignation, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

At the second celestial gathering, Satan receives permission to tempt the steadfast patriarch further through physical suffering. Accordingly, he "smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown." The saint thus finds himself suddenly plunged into the depths of misery. But when he is tempted by his sceptical wife to renounce his religious faith, the strong-hearted hero again replies, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"

**Visit of his Friends.** — Though clinging to his faith in God, Job is nevertheless overwhelmed with suffering. In his deep wretchedness, he curses the day he was born. In his despair he cries out, —



“Wherefore is light given to him that is in misery,  
And life unto the bitter in soul?”

— Ch. 3: 20.

To this cry of anguish, which touches the mystery of human suffering and God's government of the world, Eliphaz, with a delicate Oriental courtesy, presents the common Hebrew view of retributive punishment. According to this view, with which we are already familiar, suffering is simply a punishment for sin. “Remember,” says Eliphaz, —

“Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished being innocent ?  
Or where were the upright cut off ?  
According as I have seen, they that plough iniquity,  
And sow trouble, reap the same.  
By the breath of God they perish,  
And by the blast of His anger are they consumed.”

— Ch. 4: 7-9.

The following discourses of Bildad and Zophar pursue the same line of thought. This view of human suffering, though it contains an element of truth, is by no means an adequate explanation of the sorrow of the world, and in the light of the prologue we see that it has no application to Job. Accordingly the sufferer stoutly maintains his innocence, and in his great perplexity of soul is ready boldly to question God Himself: —

“I will say unto God, Do not condemn me ;  
Show me wherefore Thou contendest with me.  
Is it good unto Thee that Thou shouldest oppress,  
That Thou shouldest despise the work of Thine hands,  
And shine upon the counsel of the wicked ?”

— Ch. 10: 2, 3.

It is not difficult for Job to point out the fallacy of his friends. When the appeal is made to experience, it is seen that the wicked, instead of being outwardly punished, frequently continue in the enjoyment of prosperity to the end of their days. Accordingly he asks, —

“Wherefore do the wicked live,  
Become old, yea, wax mighty in power?  
Their seed is established with them in their sight,  
And their offspring before their eyes.  
Their houses are safe from fear,  
Neither is the rod of God upon them.”

— Ch. 21 : 7-9.

But the friends of Job refused to be convinced; and obstinately maintaining their position, they proceed to charge him with various iniquities : —

“Is not thy wickedness great?  
Neither is there any end to thine iniquities.  
For thou hast taken pledges of thy brother for nought,  
And stripped the naked of their clothing.  
Thou hast not given water to the weary to drink,  
And thou hast withholden bread from the hungry.”

— Ch. 22 : 5-7.

**Elihu's Discourses.** — All this, as we know from the prologue, is wide of the mark. In place of confession and repentance, to which Job is urged by his friends, he refuses to compromise, in any way, his conscious integrity of soul : —

“My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go :  
My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live.”

— Ch. 27 : 6.

In chapters 29 and 30, he presents a beautiful and touching contrast between his former prosperity, when his chil-

dren were about him, and his present misery, when he has become a byword. In his heart there is no stubbornness of pride. He expresses a willingness, if he has sinned, to bear his punishment: —

“If my land cry out against me,  
And the furrows thereof weep together;  
If I have eaten the fruits thereof without money,  
Or have caused the owners thereof to lose their life:  
Let thistles grow instead of wheat,  
And cockle instead of barley.”

— Ch. 31: 38-40.

At this point, when Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar are silenced, the young Elihu, who has listened to the debate with passionate interest, takes up the discourse. Against Job he reaffirms the retributive relation between sin and suffering. This relation seems to him to follow necessarily from the justice of God: —

“Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness;  
And from the Almighty, that He should commit iniquity.  
For the work of a man shall He render unto him,  
And cause every man to find according to his ways.”

— Ch. 34: 10, 11.

But Elihu does not stop with this traditional view. He emphasizes another aspect of human suffering, namely, its *disciplinary* or *redemptive* character. Apart from its *punitive* purpose, suffering is often mercifully intended, so he rightly argues, to reclaim the wicked from their iniquity: —

“Then He showeth them their work,  
And their transgressions, that they have behaved themselves  
proudly.  
He openeth also their ear to instruction,  
And commandeth that they return from iniquity.”

If they hearken and serve Him,  
They shall spend their days in prosperity,  
And their years in pleasures.  
But if they hearken not, they shall perish by the sword,  
And they shall die without knowledge."

— Ch. 36: 9-12.

**Voice from the Whirlwind.** — The mystery of suffering in human life, whatever light may have been thrown upon it, is not yet solved. Then the Lord speaks out of the whirlwind, and by a marvellous series of questions about the universe exhibits the majesty of divine goodness and power, and the insufficiency of human wisdom to fathom the ways of Providence. In many particulars the ways of God are shown to be inscrutable; and in the presence of mystery on every hand, it is vain for man to expect to fathom, in all its extent, the government of the Almighty. And where the short plummet of human penetration fails to sound the mysteries of God, a supreme faith in His goodness and mercy must come to our aid.

In the epilogue, the Lord condemns Eliphaz and his two companions, and commends the uprightness of Job. The trial of the faithful patriarch was followed by a double measure of prosperity. "And after this Job lived an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his sons' sons, even four generations."

**Various Lessons.** — This brief analysis leaves many points of interest untouched. In his sore trial Job does not fully grasp the truth of a future life. For a time he surrenders this belief entirely: —

"As the waters fail from the sea,  
And the river decayeth and drieth up;  
So man lieth down and riseth not:  
Till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake,  
Nor be roused out of their sleep."

— Ch. 14: 11, 12.

But the strong-souled patriarch cannot rest in this gloomy view ; and later in the argument, there is a splendid outburst of faith which lays hold for a moment on immortality : —

“ But I know that my vindicator liveth,  
And that He shall stand up at the last upon the earth :  
And after my skin hath been thus destroyed,  
Yet without my flesh shall I see God ;  
Whom I shall see for myself,  
And mine eyes shall behold, and not another.”

— Ch. 19 : 25-27.

In the twenty-eighth chapter there is a splendid discussion of wisdom. Though it is hid “ from the eyes of all living,” —

“ God understandeth the way thereof,  
And He knoweth the place thereof.  
For He looketh to the ends of the earth,  
And seeth under the whole heaven ;  
To make a weight for the wind ;  
Yea, He meteth out the waters by measure.  
And unto man He said,  
Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom ;  
And to depart from evil is understanding.”

Apart from interesting incidental discussion and the main problem of the poem, which is not clearly and fully solved, the book of Job is rich in its spiritual instruction. It teaches that the suffering of the righteous man has its origin in the councils of Heaven, and that it may come, not as a penal retribution, but as a beneficent test of character. It shows us, in the face of Satanic cynicism, that there is such a thing as disinterested piety ; for Job, notwithstanding his overwhelming agony of body and soul, still remains unshaken in his integrity and loyal devotion to God. It

sets forth an exalted conception of God, who, instead of a petty dispenser of rewards and punishments, is presented in the grandeur of a wise and beneficent ruler of a boundless universe. It thus rises above the narrowness which too often characterized the ancient Hebrew conception of Jehovah.

**Locality and Date.** — The land of Uz, which is named as the home of Job, was probably in northern Arabia. The hero was an Arabian emir or chieftain, who was distinguished in Hebrew tradition for his upright character. Accordingly we find Ezekiel referring to "Noah, Daniel, and Job" as preëminent in righteousness.<sup>1</sup> These facts give the drama a historic foundation.

Neither the date nor the authorship of the poem can be definitely fixed. It was once thought to be the oldest book in the Bible; and it is evident that the Arabian hero belongs to the patriarchal period. This is shown by the extraordinary age to which he is said to have attained.

But the patriarchal character of the central figure does not prove the contemporary authorship of the drama. Shakespeare wrote his Hamlet and Macbeth long after the age of those well-known characters. A little reflection will show that the book of Job belongs to the later period of Jewish development. The central problem of the poem could hardly have engaged such serious attention during the troublous times of the conquest or the lawless period of the Judges. Its finished literary character and its breadth of thought place the poem in the post-exilic age. It probably dates from 400 B.C.

**The Psalms.** — In the book of Psalms we have a large collection of the lyric poetry of the ancient Hebrews. Its one hundred and fifty psalms or hymns reach a height of

<sup>1</sup> Ez. 14: 14.



lyrical attainment unsurpassed in antiquity. Lyric poetry gives intense expression to thought and emotion; and in the Psalms—the hymn-book of the Hebrews—there is a marvellous utterance of all the varied religious feelings.

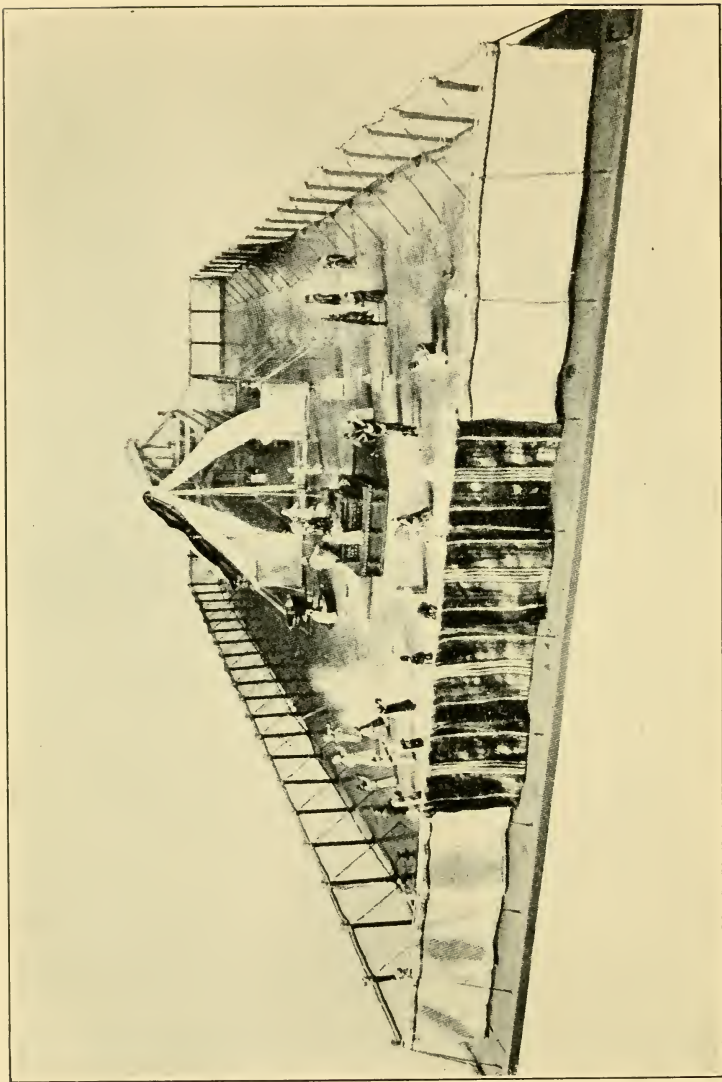
The lyric poetry of Israel is unlike that of Greece and Rome; for, in place of martial verse and songs of love, it is devoted to religion. In this great sphere of human thought and feeling, the Psalms have never been surpassed or superseded; and to-day, in all Christian lands, they are employed to voice the praises, prayers, and thanksgiving of reverent spirits. The Psalter is a spiritual treasury with which the world could ill afford to dispense.

**Growth.**—As the Psalms were composed at intervals throughout Hebrew history, the present collection is the result of an age-long growth. The 90th Psalm is ascribed to Moses, and the 137th clearly belongs to the period of the captivity; thus the book of Psalms is seen to represent the fruitage of Hebrew inspiration for nearly a thousand years.

In the Revised Version the collection is divided into five books, each of which, as will be found on examination, concludes with a doxology. The first book includes Psalms 1–41; the second, Psalms 42–72; the third, Psalms 73–89; the fourth, Psalms 90–106; the fifth, Psalms 107–150. These books were arranged at different times and by different editors or compilers. This is proved by the repetition of psalms,<sup>1</sup> and by the different words used to designate the Supreme Being. In the first, fourth, and fifth books God is called *Jehovah* in the Hebrew; in the second and third, *Elohim*.

<sup>1</sup> Compare Ps. 53 with Ps. 14, and Ps. 70 with Ps. 40: 13–17.





A JEWISH TABERNACLE

**Titles.** — It will be observed that most of the Psalms are provided with titles, which contain various items of information. For one thing, they usually indicate authorship. Accordingly, seventy-three psalms are assigned to David, two to Solomon, twelve to Asaph, eleven to the sons of Korah, one to Moses, one to Heman the Ezrahite, and one to Ethan the Ezrahite. Thirty-four are without any indication of authorship, and hence are known among the Jews as “orphans.”

But unfortunately the question of authorship is not so easily settled. The titles do not form a part of the original Psalms, but are a later and, as many believe, an untrustworthy addition. For this reason modern scholarship has greatly reduced the number of Psalms to be ascribed to David. However, the uncertain question of authorship does not affect the intrinsic excellence of the Psalms.

**Musical Directions.** — The titles frequently give directions for the musical rendering of the Psalms. In some cases the Hebrew is obscure, and in the Revised Version is left untranslated. Sometimes the title indicates the nature of the instruments that are to accompany the vocal rendition of the Psalm. The fourth Psalm, for example, is to be accompanied by stringed instruments, and the fifth by wind-instruments. In other cases, as in the ninth Psalm, the title seems to indicate the melody or chant to be used.

The musical rendering of the Psalms in connection with the tabernacle and temple service must have been often elaborate and impressive. From the record in 1 Chronicles, we have already learned of the extensive arrangements made by David for bringing the ark from the house of Obed-edom to Jerusalem, and for the later services of the

temple. The great choir was supported by a large orchestra of instruments, consisting of psalteries, and harps, and cymbals, and trumpets.

**A Processional Hymn.** — It has been supposed that the 24th Psalm was used as a kind of processional hymn when the ark was brought to Jerusalem. Its liturgical character is sufficiently obvious. As the great procession, led by King David in a robe of white linen, reached the city, it seems to have paused outside the massive and ancient gates. Suddenly the full choir and orchestra broke forth in a united ascription of praise to the Almighty : —

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof;  
The world, and they that dwell therein.  
For He hath founded it upon the seas,  
And established it upon the floods.”

After this splendid outburst in full symphony, a powerful priestly voice continued as a solo : —

“Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?  
And who shall stand in His holy place?”

To this solemn question another priestly voice replies : —

“He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart ;  
Who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity,  
And hath not sworn deceitfully.  
He shall receive a blessing from the Lord,  
And righteousness from the God of his salvation.”

This solo is followed by the full symphony of singers and instruments, whose harmonies, like the voice of many waters, fill the mountain and valley : —

“This is the generation of them that seek after Him,  
That seek Thy face, O God of Jacob.”

For a moment there is an impressive silence indicated by the word *Selah*. Then the full choir, conscious of its mighty mission in bringing the ark of the Lord to the capital of the kingdom, turns to the closed and barred gates of the city : —

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates ;  
And be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors :  
And the King of glory shall come in.”

The warden stationed on the wall above the gates answers in loud antiphony : —

“Who is the King of glory?”

And the full chorus responds : —

“The Lord strong and mighty,  
The Lord mighty in battle.”

But the watchword has not yet been given, and the gates remain closed. Once more the full choir sings : —

“Lift up your heads, O ye gates ;  
Yea, lift them up, ye everlasting doors :  
And the King of glory shall come in.”

Again the warden demands : —

“Who is this King of glory?”

And the full choir triumphantly replies : —

“THE LORD OF HOSTS  
He is the King of glory.”

This is the mighty watchword of the day ; and instantly the gates are flung open wide, and the long procession moves with its sacred charge to the doors of the tabernacle.



**Historic Setting.** — It is always interesting to know the occasion that called forth some admirable literary production, and often this knowledge enables us to enter more fully into its spirit. In a number of cases the titles of the Psalms indicate the occasion of the poem, and by this historic setting impart to them a new depth of meaning. If we think of the 90th Psalm, for example, as written by Moses near the close of the forty years' wandering in the wilderness, we can better understand the gloomy view of life it presents. After having seen an entire generation pass away in the midst of the hopeless hardships of the wilderness, it was but natural for the great leader, in an hour of depression, to say : —

“For all our days are passed away in Thy wrath :  
We bring our years to an end as a tale that is told.  
The days of our years are threescore years and ten,  
Or if by reason of strength fourscore years ;  
Yet is their pride but labor and sorrow ;  
For it is soon gone, and we fly away.”

We may take, again, the third Psalm, which was written, as the title informs us, when David was fleeing from Absalom. This fact enables us to read a deeper meaning into the opening, burdened cry of the poem : —

“Lord, how are mine adversaries increased!  
Many are they that rise up against me.  
Many there be which say of my soul,  
There is no help for him in God.”

At the same time, the later verses of the poem show us the strength of David's faith in the Lord.

It is to be regretted that in some cases the titles are misleading as to the circumstances of the Psalm, and fail, therefore, to throw any light upon it.

**Varied Themes.** — The wide range of themes found in the Psalms cannot be otherwise than astonishing. There is scarcely any phase of the religious or spiritual life that remains untouched. These sacred lyrics deal with the fundamental truths and experiences of true religion ; and hence they have little to say about ritual observances, and much about the relation of the soul to God. They are prophetic rather than priestly. Hence David, in his great penitential Psalm, says : —

“ Thou delightest not in sacrifice ; else would I give it ;  
Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering.  
The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit ;  
A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” <sup>1</sup>

Perhaps no other fact is more characteristic or more fundamental in the Psalms than their strong, pervading consciousness of God. Nowhere else do we find a more beautiful statement of His omnipresent and providential care than in the 139th Psalm : —

“ Whither shall I go from Thy spirit?  
Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?  
If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there ;  
If I make my bed in Sheol, behold, Thou art there.  
If I take the wings of the morning,  
And dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea ;  
Even there shall Thy hand lead me,  
And Thy right hand shall hold me.”

This strong sense of the divine presence and goodness was attended with a corresponding trust, which imparted to the psalmist at the same time force of character and serenity of mind. This is shown in the opening verses of the 46th Psalm : —

<sup>1</sup> Ps. 51 : 16, 17.

"God is our refuge and strength,  
A very present help in trouble.  
Therefore will not we fear though the earth do change,  
And though the mountains be moved in the heart of the seas;  
Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,  
Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

The first Psalm is a fitting introduction to the entire collection. It teaches the blessedness of the righteous, and the judgment of the wicked. Though the outward contrasts in this life are by no means so striking and invariable as the Hebrew poet imagined, the truth he presents is necessarily universal. When the ways of God are understood in all their wide reach and results, there can never be any ground to impeach His justice and goodness. It will always remain true that, —

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked  
Nor standeth in the way of sinners,  
Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.  
But his delight is in the law of the Lord;  
And in His law doth he meditate day and night."

The whole circuit of religious emotion — joy and sorrow, faith and doubt, confidence and repentance, righteousness and sin, triumph and failure, love and hate — finds full and repeated expression in the Psalms. So varied are the subjects treated that no effort at classification has been entirely satisfactory. Often a single Psalm breathes forth many phases of spiritual experience.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"To be sincere, simple, genuine, transparent with God, to dare to show Him our worst as well as our best, to dare to ask Him to search us and see if there be any evil way in us, to treat Him as we treat the physician, pointing out to Him everything in us that He may teach us what is evil and what is good, and how to abhor the evil and to cleave to the good, to treat Him as our best and most intimate friend, from whom we wish to conceal nothing, — this is one of the lessons which the unreserved candor of these ancient lyrics teaches, and which the church still has need to learn." — LYMAN ABBOTT, "Life and Literature of the Ancient Hebrews," p. 315.

## RESEARCH WORK

## JOB

- The prologue, 1, 2.  
Job curses the day of his birth, 3.  
The first speech of Eliphaz, 4, 5.  
Job's desire of death, 7.  
The first speech of Bildad, 8.  
Job's complaint to God, 10.  
The first speech of Zophar, 11.  
Job's defence against his friends, 12-14.  
Prosperity of the wicked, 24.  
A tribute to wisdom, 28.  
Job's contrast of prosperity and adversity, 29, 30.  
The discourses of Elihu, 32-37.  
Jehovah's addresses from the whirlwind, 38-41.  
The epilogue, 42.

## PSALMS

- A contrast of the righteous and the wicked, Ps. 1.  
David's Psalm when fleeing from Absalom, Ps. 4.  
Insignificance and greatness of man, Ps. 8.  
A citizen of Zion, Ps. 15.  
A story of deliverance from enemies, Ps. 18.  
Nature and the law of God, Ps. 19.  
An expression of confidence, Ps. 23.  
A processional song, Ps. 24.  
A hymn of faith, Ps. 27.  
God manifested in a thunderstorm, Ps. 29.  
Blessedness of forgiveness, Ps. 32.  
A hymn of praise, Ps. 33.  
Admonition to patience and confidence, Ps. 37.  
The brevity of life, Ps. 39.  
A marriage hymn, Ps. 45.  
A song of triumphant trust, Ps. 46.  
David's penitence and prayer, Ps. 51.  
David's prayer when fleeing from Saul, Ps. 57.  
A song of exile, Ps. 63.

- A hymn of praise, Ps. 65.
- A Psalm of Solomon, Ps. 72.
- A historical contemplation, Ps. 78.
- A prayer of Moses, Ps. 90.
- A song for the Sabbath day, Ps. 92.
- An exhortation to praise God, Ps. 103.
- A meditation on the power of God, Ps. 104.
- A national anthem, Ps. 105.
- The blessing of righteousness, Ps. 112.
- An alphabetic Psalm, Ps. 119.
- Pilgrim songs, or songs of degrees, Ps. 120-134.
- An elegy of the captivity, Ps. 137.
- David's Psalm of praise, Ps. 145.
- Exhortations to praise, Ps. 146-150.

## CHAPTER IX

### PROVERBS, ECCLESIASTES, AND SONG OF SOLOMON

**Wisdom Literature.** — In Job we have had a spiritual drama; in Psalms, a splendid collection of lyrics; and now, in the book of Proverbs we have an admirable body of didactic poetry. The couplets and more elaborate forms of verse that enter into Proverbs belong to what is called the Wisdom literature of the Hebrews. This literature takes the place of philosophical writing among other peoples. It is indeed a kind of philosophy, based not on abstract speculation, but on practical observation. It is utilitarian in spirit; but like nearly all the other writings of the ancient Jews, it rests on a religious foundation, and is pervaded by a religious tone. As is stated in the first chapter, —

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”

But while the Wisdom literature is essentially religious, it is not concerned, as are the Psalms, with spiritual emotions and high theological truths. It deals with the every-day affairs of life; and accordingly we find practical directions for individual conduct, social duties, and commercial transactions. If fully exemplified in individual life, the teachings of Proverbs would result in a noble type of manhood, in which a profound piety would be joined to the virtues of purity, sobriety, diligence, generosity, and prudence. The book is therefore well worth a careful study.



**Division and Authorship.** — A brief examination of the book of Proverbs will show that it is not an organic or connected unity. It is obviously a compilation, which is readily divided into six parts as follows : —

1. The praise of Wisdom (chapters 1-9).
2. Proverbs of Solomon (chapters 10-22 : 16).
3. Words of the Wise (chapter 22 : 17-24).
4. Additional proverbs of Solomon (chapters 25-29).
5. The words of Agur (chapter 30).
6. The words of King Lemuel, including the beautiful description of a virtuous woman (chapter 31).

It is thus seen that the book of Proverbs is a composite work. But the second part, which constitutes the body of the book, is attributed to Solomon ; and there seems to be no sufficient reason for discarding this ancient belief. We know from 1 Kings 4 : 32 that Solomon “spake three thousand proverbs” ; and in the work before us it is highly probable that some of these wise sayings have been preserved.

The introduction to the fourth part tells us that “these also are proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, King of Judah, copied out.” Though many of the proverbs are of different authorship and of much later date, tradition has probably made no mistake in associating the book with the name of the wise king of Israel.

**Part First.** — The purpose of the book of Proverbs is clearly stated in the opening verses. Its aim is altogether practical : —

“To give subtilty to the simple,  
To the young man knowledge and discretion :  
That the wise man may hear and increase in learning ;  
And that the man of understanding may attain to sound counsels.”

The general theme of part first is the praise of wisdom, the excellence of which is celebrated in elaborate verse:—

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom,  
And the man that getteth understanding.  
For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver,  
And the gain thereof than fine gold.  
She is more precious than rubies;  
And none of the things thou canst desire are to be compared unto her.  
Length of days is in her right hand;  
In her left hand riches and honor.  
Her ways are ways of pleasantness,  
And all her paths are peace.  
She is a tree of life to them that lay hold of her;  
And happy is every one that retaineth her.”

—Ch. 3: 13-18.

While earnestly commending wisdom, the writer, speaking in the character of a father, warns his imaginary son or disciple against various evils to which he is likely to be exposed. Crimes of violence are to be avoided; the snares of the “strange woman” are clearly pointed out; the imprudence of becoming surety for another is dwelt upon; and several sins especially hated of the Lord are woven together in an elaborate stanza. Here is what Professor Moulton calls a “Sonnet on the Sluggard”:<sup>1</sup>—

“Go to the ant, thou sluggard;  
Consider her ways, and be wise:  
Which having no chief,  
Overseer or ruler,  
Provideth her meat in the summer,  
And gathereth her food in the harvest.  
How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?  
When wilt thou arise out of thy sleep?  
‘Yet a little sleep, a little slumber,  
A little folding of the hands to sleep:’

<sup>1</sup> R. G. Moulton, “Literary Study of the Bible,” p. 281.

So shall thy poverty come as a robber,  
And thy want as an armed man."

— Ch. 6 : 6-11.

**Part Second.** — The second part is made up, as the title informs us, of "the proverbs of Solomon." These are brief, sententious sayings in the form of couplets. The antithetic form of parallelism is the prevailing type. The proverbs treat of a great variety of subjects, and observe no distinguishable order. Though a dominant religious spirit underlies the collection, the proverbs deal almost exclusively with the ordinary secular relations of life. They are as applicable to life to-day as in the reign of the great king of Israel.

Out of this store of practical wisdom only two or three extracts, by way of illustration, can be taken. In the present day, when wealth is so often acquired in unscrupulous ways, it is well to remember that —

"Better is a little with righteousness  
Than great revenues with injustice."

— Ch. 1 : 8.

Every thoughtful man is conscious of the fact that there is a power over him that, in large measure, controls his destiny. This fact was recognized ages ago; and so we are told that —

"A man's heart deviseth his way;  
But the Lord directeth his steps."

— Ch. 16 : 9.

In sympathy with the prophetic spirit of Israel, the Proverbs teach a religion, not of ritualistic ceremonies, but of practical ethics. Thus they declare that —

"To do justice and judgment  
Is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice."

— Ch. 21 : 3.

**Part Third.** — The third part of Proverbs is composed of “the words of the Wise.”<sup>1</sup> Like the preceding parts, it deals with the usual duties and ills of life. In place of antithetic couplets, it uses various elaborated forms of parallelism. It warns against the oppression of the poor; against friendship with a man given to anger; against the removal of landmarks; and against gluttony, envy, and sloth.

Drunkenness seems to have been a common vice in the writer’s day, and accordingly he utters repeated and vigorous warnings against it: —

“Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions?  
Who hath complaining? who hath wounds without cause?  
Who hath redness of eyes?

They that tarry long at the wine;

They that go to seek out mixed wine.

Look not thou upon the wine when it is red,

When it giveth its color in the cup,

When it goeth down smoothly:

At the last it biteth like a serpent,

And stingeth like an adder.”

— Ch. 23: 29-32.

**Other Parts.** — Of the remaining parts there is not room to speak at any length. “The words of Agur,” as contained in the thirtieth chapter, are embodied in a series of lengthy verse forms, in which the number *four* is conspicuous. We find in them a warning against slander, the marks of an evil generation, four insatiable things, the fate of the disobedient son, four incomprehensible things, four intolerable things, four wise animals, four things stately in their going, and a warning against strife.

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 22: 17-24.

The poet's prayer for the golden mean of fortune is as follows:—

“Two things have I asked of Thee ;  
Deny me them not before I die :  
Remove far from me vanity and lies :  
Give me neither poverty nor riches ;  
Feed me with the food that is needful for me :  
Lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord ?  
Or lest I be poor, and steal,  
And use profanely the name of my God.”

The last chapter of Proverbs contains the praises of a virtuous woman. Perhaps no greater tribute has ever been paid to faithful, diligent, wise, and upright womanhood:—

“She openeth her mouth with wisdom ;  
And the law of kindness is on her tongue.  
She looketh well to the ways of her household,  
And eateth not the bread of idleness.  
Her children rise up, and call her blessed ;  
Her husband also, and he praiseth her, saying,  
Many daughters have done virtuously,  
But thou excellest them all.”

**Ecclesiastes.**—The book of Ecclesiastes sounds a strange note in the harmonies of the Old Testament. Its view of life, in spite of a fundamental trust in God, is depressing. Its theme throughout is the emptiness of life. Wherever the writer turns his eyes, he finds that “all is vanity.” “I have seen all the works,” he declares, “that are done under the sun ; and, behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit. That which is crooked cannot be made straight ; and that which is wanting cannot be numbered.”<sup>1</sup>

This morbid and depressing view of life has caused devout scholars no end of perplexity. Many are the con-

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. 1 : 14, 15.

tradiictory views which have been entertained. Yet the explanation seems near at hand. In Ecclesiastes we have a matchless utterance of the sense of world-weariness that is apt at times to come to us all. When our store of vitality runs low, when our hopes have been repeatedly shattered, and the course of the world seems all awry, then with the ancient Preacher we are apt to feel that "all is vanity."

It is this full expression of a mood, felt at times by most men, that invests Ecclesiastes with a peculiar interest. It has been called the most modern book of the Old Testament. Certainly its mood is often felt in the midst of modern competitive life, and sometimes embodied in modern literature. Thackeray understood its burden when in his *Vanitas Vanitatem*, he wrote:—

"Though thrice a thousand years have passed  
Since David's son, the sad and splendid,  
The weary king Ecclesiast,  
Upon his awful tablets penned it,—

"Methinks the text is never stale,  
And life is every day renewing  
Fresh comments on the old, old tale  
Of fortune, folly, glory, ruin."<sup>1</sup>

**Authorship and Date.**—The traditional view ascribes the authorship to Solomon. This view is based on the opening statement, which assigns the authorship to "the son of David, King of Jerusalem." Furthermore, the magnificence, wealth, and power displayed in the experiments

<sup>1</sup> "Ecclesiastes needs a certain preparation of the mind and character, a certain 'elective affinity,' in order to be appreciated as it deserves. To enjoy it, we must find our own difficulties and our own moods anticipated in it. We must be able to sympathize with its author either in his world-weariness and scepticism, or in his victorious struggle (if so be it was victorious) through darkness into light."—T. K. CHEYNE, "Job and Solomon," p. 242.



of the second chapter are in keeping with the regal station and historic achievements of David's illustrious son.

But the prevailing view among biblical scholars of the present day makes Solomon the *hero* rather than the *author* of the book. A later writer, in accordance with a common custom, placed his reflections on life in the mouth of the ancient king of Israel. This view is based chiefly on two facts: first, the sentiments and political conditions reflected in the poem are often out of keeping with the character and reign of Solomon; and, second, the language of the original, in its use of foreign words and idioms, betrays a corruption of the older classic Hebrew. Accordingly, the probable date is indicated as about 200 B.C., which makes Ecclesiastes one of the latest books of the Old Testament.

**Search for Happiness.** — The book of Ecclesiastes is not a logically developed treatise. It seems to consist of a succession of essays or observations, which are separated by interludes of brief or proverbial comments on life. The greater part of the book is in prose; but now and then, as in portions of the seventh, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth chapters, it rises into the region of poetic thought and expression. We may, therefore, regard Ecclesiastes as a prose poem.

The most clearly defined portion of the book is Solomon's search for happiness, as related in the first two chapters. After dwelling on the wearisome round of the world, which entombs successive generations in the depths of oblivion, the royal preacher recounts his fourfold experiment to ascertain "what it was good for the sons of men that they should do under the heaven all the days of their life." He first tried wisdom; but at last it seemed to him "a striving after wind. For in much wisdom is much grief: and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow."

The disappointed seeker then turns to pleasure. He builds magnificent houses and lays out splendid parks. He accumulates great treasures of gold and silver, and surrounds himself with every form of artistic and sensual delight. "Whatsoever mine eyes desired," he tells us, "I kept not from them; I withheld not my heart from any joy." And what was the result? It might well stand as a warning to all those who to-day are following in the footsteps of the voluptuous king: "Behold, all was vanity and a striving after wind, and there was no profit under the sun."

In his renewed and bitter disappointment, the king proceeds to study the wisdom and folly of human nature, and finds that "one event happeneth" alike to wise men and to fools. The acquisition of riches likewise failed to bring him peace of mind; for, apart from the strenuous toil of accumulation, which prevented his heart from taking rest, he could not tell who would inherit his wealth.

As a result of his search after the supreme good of life, the royal investigator reaches a conclusion. It is the conclusion of the faithful, prosaic man in every age, who, through bitter disappointments, has still retained his hold on God. It is the deep lesson of duty. "There is nothing better for a man," says the royal preacher, "than that he should eat and drink, and make his soul enjoy good in his labor. This also I saw, that it is from the hand of God."

**Contradictory Views.**—As in the case of most men who take morbid views of life, we recognize in the author of Ecclesiastes changing moods and contradictory sentiments. Sometimes a gleam of light breaks through the gloom. At one time, with a triumphant pessimism, he roundly declares that life is an evil. "I praised the dead which are already dead," he says, "more than the living

which are yet alive; yea, better than them both did I esteem him which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun.”<sup>1</sup>

At other times the royal ecclesiast takes a more cheerful view of life. He declares “a living dog is better than a dead lion” (9:4); and during a brief rift in the clouds he finds that “truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun. Yea, if a man live many years, let him rejoice in them all” (11:7, 8).

**A Fixed Principle.** — Rarely has any man more clearly perceived the various ills of life than the author of this interesting book. He has discovered the insufficiency of intellectual attainments, royal splendor, and boundless wealth to still the imperious longings of the soul. He has seen wrong usurping the place of justice; he has recognized the trials, disappointments, and sufferings of life; he has keenly felt the limitations of human knowledge and the impossibility of fully understanding the ways of God; he has discerned the frequent prosperity of the wicked and the ofttime adversity of the righteous.

But through it all he has held fast to one anchor of the soul. Righteousness is not in vain on the earth. “Though a sinner do evil an hundred times,” he says, “and prolong his days, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him; but it shall not be well with the wicked.”<sup>2</sup> In this truth we recognize the

<sup>1</sup> Eccl. 4: 2, 3. Compare this with a stanza in Byron’s “Euthanasia”:—

“Count o’er the joys thine hours have seen,  
Count o’er thy days from anguish free:  
And know, whatever thou hast been,  
’Tis something better not to be.”

<sup>2</sup> Eccl. 8: 12, 13.

unconquerable Hebrew faith in the sovereignty and justice of God.<sup>1</sup>

**The Epilogue.** — There is not space to dwell upon the well-known “philosophy of times” as presented in the third chapter, nor upon the beautiful symbolic poem on life in the last chapter, beginning —

“Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth,  
While the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh,  
When thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them;  
While the sun, or the light, or the moon, or the stars, be not  
darkened,  
Nor the clouds return after the rain.”

It only remains to give the final conclusion to which the author comes after all his contemplation of life. This conclusion reveals to us the deeply religious character of the author, and, in spite of its gloom, the religious aim of the book. Though its reception into the canon was late, there was no mistake made in giving it a place in the Old Testament scriptures. Whatever errors of judgment may have escaped the writer in his moments of deepest gloom, there can be no doubt as to the truth of the final outcome: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter; fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.”

**Song of Solomon.** — Like the book of Ecclesiastes, the Song of Solomon strikes a new and strange note in the

<sup>1</sup> “Single passages, taken apart from their connection, might seem to express a frank Epicureanism and the grossest materialism, a frivolous scepticism and desolate despair of every thing ideal; but we should do the author bitter injustice, if we saw therein his final word and his true meaning. No, he has not given up his faith in God and a moral order of the world.” — CORNILL, “Einleitung in das Alte Testament,” p. 250.

Old Testament writings. It does not mention the name of God; it is destitute of any clear ethical motive. As Cornill remarks, "No unprejudiced reader can for a moment doubt that love, the love of man for woman and the love of woman for man, is the sole and uniform theme of the Song."<sup>1</sup>

But this unethical character of the book was not readily accepted by the biblical scholars of the early and mediæval church. On the basis of its celebration of human love, its place in the sacred Scriptures could not easily be justified. Accordingly, the Song of Songs was considered an allegory, which represented the mutual love existing between Christ and the church. This allegorical view, which lifts the poem into the realm of religion, is indicated in the headings of the chapters in the King James version.

**Literary Form.** — It has long been a difficult problem to master the literary form of Solomon's Song. A cursory reading shows that in part at least the poem is in the form of dialogue. In the first chapter, for example, it is clear that a man and a woman—a bridegroom and a bride—are expressing to each other their mutual admiration and love:—

*"Bridegroom.* I have compared thee, O my love,  
To a steed in Pharaoh's chariots.  
Thy cheeks are comely with plaits of hair,  
Thy neck with strings of jewels.  
We will make thee plaits of gold  
With studs of silver.

*"Bride.* While the king sat at his table,  
My spikenard sent forth its fragrance.  
My beloved is unto me as a bundle of myrrh,  
That lieth betwixt my breasts.  
My beloved is unto me as a cluster of henna-flowers  
In the vineyards of Engedi."

<sup>1</sup> Cornill, "Einleitung in das Alte Testament," p. 253.

But there are no stage directions; King Solomon and a Shulammite maiden are only incidentally indicated as *dramatis personæ*; and the divisions of the work are only occasionally indicated by a refrain, as in the second and third chapters:—

“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,  
By the roes, and by the hinds of the field,  
That ye stir not up, nor awaken love,  
Until it please.”

**A Lyrical Drama.**—In the presence of these obscurities of structure, critical ingenuity has been severely taxed to make out the precise form that was in the mind of the original writer. As might be expected, there has been great divergence of view. Fortunately, the solution of the problem has been found in our recent acquaintance with Oriental marriage customs, and we are amply justified in pronouncing the Song of Songs a sort of lyrical drama.

In Syria the wedding festivities, known as “the king’s week,” continue for seven days. The bridegroom and bride, as king and queen, occupy improvised thrones in the presence of many neighborhood guests; and the occasion is enlivened by songs, dances, and plays. In the work before us we probably have a collection of songs arranged for such a wedding festival. With this fact in mind, the general plan and spirit of the piece become convincingly clear.

**Dramatic Analysis.**—Accordingly, the characters are the king, his bride, and a chorus of the daughters of Jerusalem. We may distinguish seven lyrical scenes which collectively round out a beautiful work of art. Only the general character of the successive scenes can be indicated:—



1. The wedding day (1 : 2-2 : 7).
2. The bride's reminiscences of the courtship (2 : 8-3 : 5).
3. The day of betrothal (3 : 6-5 : 1).
4. The bride's troubled dream (5 : 2-6 : 3).
5. The king's meditation on his bride (6 : 4-7 : 9).
6. The bride's longing for her home in Lebanon (7 : 10-8 : 4).
7. The renewal of love in the vineyard of Lebanon (8 : 5-14).<sup>1</sup>

In the first scene the bride is conducted, with an attendant chorus of maidens, to the palace of her husband. It closes with a refrain. In the second scene the bride dwells upon the days of courtship, and recounts the happy ending of a troubled dream :—

“When I found him whom my soul loveth,  
I held him and would not let him go.”

The third scene describes the stately coming of the king, and repeats his words of ardent admiration :—

“Behold, thou art fair, my love ; behold, thou art fair ;  
Thine eyes are as doves behind thy veil ;  
Thy hair is as a flock of goats,  
That lie along the side of Mount Gilead.”

In the fourth scene the bride relates a troubled dream, in which she loses her lover and seeks for him in vain. Scene fifth contains the king's meditation on the perfections of his bride, with a reminiscence of their first meeting. In scene sixth the bride expresses a longing for her home in Lebanon :—

<sup>1</sup> These titles are taken from Professor Moulton, whose arrangement of the Song of Songs in his “Literary Study of the Bible” is admirably worked out.

"Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field;  
 Let us lodge in the villages.  
 Let us get up early to the vineyards;  
 Let us see whether the vine hath budded and its blossom be open,  
 And the pomegranates be in flower:  
 There I will give thee my love."

In the last scene, there is a renewal of the pledges of mutual affection, and the bride pays an immortal tribute to the might of love :—

"Set me as a seal upon thine heart,  
 As a seal upon thine arm :  
 For love is strong as death ;  
 Jealousy is cruel as the grave :  
 The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,  
 A very flame of the Lord.  
 Many waters cannot quench love,  
 Neither can the floods drown it ;  
 If a man would give all the substance of his house for love,  
 It would utterly be contemned."

**Love of Nature.** — In this brief analysis we have caught a glimpse of the spirit of poetry and the intensity of passion which pervade the drama. There is a freedom of description that is not in keeping with modern taste ; yet the poem breathes a blameless purity. Every part of it rises far above the commonplace. The descriptions of nature are especially beautiful.<sup>1</sup> Take, for example, a few

<sup>1</sup> "It abounds in poetical gems of the purest ray. It breathes the bracing air of the hill country, and the passionate love of man for woman and woman for man. It is a revelation of the keen Hebrew delight in nature, in her vineyards and pastures, flowers and fruit trees, in her doves and deer and sheep and goats. It is a song tremulous from beginning to end with the passion of love ; and this love it depicts in terms never coarse, but often frankly sensuous — so frankly sensuous that in the first century its place in the canon was earnestly contested by Jewish scholars." — JOHN E. MCFADYEN, "Introduction to the Old Testament," p. 282.

lines from the bride's recollection of the days of courtship:—

“My beloved spake, and said unto me,  
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.  
For, lo, the winter is past,  
The rain is over and gone;  
The flowers appear on the earth;  
The time of the singing of birds is come,  
And the voice of the turtle is heard in the land;  
The fig tree ripeneth her green figs,  
And the vines are in blossom,  
They give forth their fragrance.”

**Meaning of the Poem.**—Though the date and authorship are unknown, the meaning of this admirable lyrical drama can hardly be mistaken. It is a celebration of the beauty and sacredness of wedded love. Marriage—the union of one man and one woman for life—is a divine institution. It was consecrated by the presence of Jesus at Cana of Galilee.<sup>1</sup> In an age when marriage was too often despised or degraded by lust and polygamy, it was fitting that this poem, with its purity of spirit and charm of womanhood, should be sent forth on its regenerating mission.

Though an allegorical interpretation was obviously never intended by the poet, yet the drama in a measure lends itself to that treatment. The relation between God and His people is often compared to the relation of husband and wife. Throughout the Old Testament, the idolatry of the Hebrews is frequently stigmatized as adultery. In view of these facts, the ardent and faithful affection between the bridegroom and bride may be easily transferred, as in the King James version, to Christ and His church.

<sup>1</sup> John 2: 1-11.

## RESEARCH WORK

### PROVERBS

- Wisdom's words of warning, Prov. 1 : 20-33.
- The blessings of wisdom, Prov. 2.
- Various interesting exhortations of wisdom, Prov. 3.
- Warnings against the strange woman, Prov. 5.
- The snares of the adulterous woman, Prov. 7.
- Proverbs of Solomon, Prov. 10-22.
- The evils of wine-bibbing, Prov. 23 : 20-35.
- Fools, sluggards, and meddlers, Prov. 26.
- The proverbs of Agur, Prov. 30.
- Praise of the virtuous housewife, Prov. 31 : 10-31.

### ECCLESIASTES

- Solomon's search for happiness, Eccl. 1 : 12-2.
- Discussion of times and seasons, Eccl. 3-4 : 8.
- The vanity of desire, Eccl. 5 : 10-6 : 12.
- Symbolic poem on old age, Eccl. 12 : 1-7.

### SONG OF SOLOMON

- The wedding day, Song of Solomon, 1 : 2-2 : 7.
- The bride's reminiscences of courtship, 2 : 8-3 : 5.
- The day of betrothal, 3 : 6-5 : 1.
- The bride's troubled dream, 5 : 2-6 : 3.
- The king's meditation on his bride, 6 : 4-7 : 9.
- The bride's longing for Lebanon, 7 : 10-8 : 4.
- The renewal of love in the vineyard, 8 : 5-14.

## CHAPTER X

### STUDIES IN THE MAJOR PROPHETS — ISAIAH AND JEREMIAH

**Introduction.** — About one-fourth of the Old Testament is filled with the writings of the prophets. The first four — Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel — are commonly known as the greater or major prophets. They deserve this distinction both for the quantity of their writings and the importance of their message. In entering upon a study of the prophets, it must be borne in mind that they were not chiefly foretellers of events. They were earnest preachers of righteousness in the presence of political problems or religious decadence. They were the divinely appointed agents to lead the Hebrew people in the paths of righteousness.

They were gifted men who clearly grasped the fundamental truths of religion. They attached but little importance to its outward ceremonies; but they had a noble conception of God, and eloquently enforced obedience to truth and righteousness. To adopt the words of Duncker, they declared that "the lips and the heart must be elevated to His greatness; His commands must be kept, and men must make themselves holy as He is holy. The only service of the Holy God is a holy and righteous life. Sacrifice is not required, but recognition of God, simplicity, chastity, and moderation."<sup>1</sup> The prophetic books are made up principally of popular addresses, which are frequently characterized by poetic imagery and masterful eloquence.

<sup>1</sup> Max Duncker, "History of Antiquity," Vol. III., p. 27.

**Isaiah.** — The first of the prophetic books is Isaiah. This great prophet was a citizen of Jerusalem, a man of distinction, and a preacher of impressive power. His contemporaries in the prophetic office were Hosea and Micah, whose work will come under review later. As the introduction to his prophecies tells us, he lived "in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah."<sup>1</sup>

This statement enables us to reproduce the political and religious conditions under which Isaiah received his prophetic call. It was the second half of the eighth century before our era (758–690 B.C.). As we learn from 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles, as well as from the historical part of the prophecy itself (chapters 36–39), it was a period of great commotion. The kings of Judah warred against the Philistines and the Ammonites. Ahaz suffered a severe defeat at the hands of Israel. Though the temple worship was kept up, abominable idolatries at times prevailed.

Furthermore, it was a time of world movements, — of restless and insatiable activity among the great empires of the Orient. Assyria, Babylon, and Egypt were continually plotting or warring against one another. Assyrian conquerors repeatedly swept over Syria; and in 722 B.C. Sargon captured Samaria and forever put an end to the kingdom of Israel. Judah was henceforth left alone to

#### <sup>1</sup> CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF IMPORTANT EVENTS

B.C.

740. Call of Isaiah.

732. Damascus taken by Tiglath-pileser.

727. Shalmaneser IV.

722. Samaria captured by Sargon.

701. Sennacherib's campaign against Judah.

607. Destruction of Nineveh by the Medes.

586. Destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar.

538. Cyrus captures Babylon, and releases Jewish exiles.



be the bearer of the religion of Jehovah. Subsequently its territory was invaded by the conquering arms of Sennacherib; and Judah was saved only by a fatal pestilence that in a single night swept away a large part of the Assyrian army.

**Occasion of Prophecies.** — As already indicated, the prophecies of Isaiah extended through the reigns of three Kings of Judah. From first to last, they covered a period of about fifty years. The several discourses, which compose the book of Isaiah, were called forth by particular religious or political conditions. They were intended to guide the thought and action of the Hebrew people in particular exigencies. It is perfectly clear, therefore, that a knowledge of the occasion will throw light upon the words of the prophet.

It is unfortunate that the numerous separate discourses are not arranged in a chronological order. They are, in the main, grouped by subjects. They may be conveniently divided into seven groups as follows:—

1. Discourses relating to Judah and Israel (chapters 1-12).
2. Discourses dealing with foreign nations (chapters 13-23).
3. Picture of a world judgment (chapters 24-27).
4. Discourses relating to Judah and Assyria (chapters 28-33).
5. Future of Edom and Israel contrasted (chapters 34, 35).
6. Historical section based on 2 Kings (chapters 36-39).
7. Israel's restoration from exile in Babylon (chapters 40-66).

**Isaiah's Call.** — The various conditions and emergencies in the history of his people Isaiah met with a broad, patriotic, and righteous spirit. Like the other prophets of Judah and Israel, he regarded himself as a messenger of the Lord. In the sixth chapter he gives us an account of his call to the prophetic office. He had a vision of the Lord. In antiphonal songs of praise, the seraphim cried: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory. And the foundations of the thresholds were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

"Then flew one of the seraphim unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he touched my mouth with it, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then I said, Here am I; send me." The vision of the King and the sound of his voice, — that was the secret of the prophet's preaching and power.

**The Great Arraignment.** — It will not be practicable here to follow each one of the discourses making up the book of Isaiah. Such an undertaking belongs to a commentary or a more extended work on the Old Testament. It will be sufficient here to examine two or three typical discourses, and to point out the spirit and manner of the prophet.

We begin with the first chapter, which has been called *the great arraignment of Judah*. The time seems to be the reign of Ahaz, who, as we learn from 2 Kings 16, "did not that which was right in the eyes of the Lord his God, like

David his father. But he walked in the way of the Kings of Israel, yea, and made his sons pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the Lord cast out before the children of Israel. And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree."

It was in the presence of this official and public idolatry that Isaiah addressed his great arraignment to the Hebrew people. His eloquent words are surcharged with emotion. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, for the Lord hath spoken: I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly: they have forsaken the Lord, they have despised the Holy One of Israel, they are estranged and gone backward."

This indictment, which is more extended than here given, the rulers are supposed to have met by referring to the regularity and splendor of the temple service. They brought forward their assemblies and sacrifices as a proof of their loyalty to Jehovah. To these statements the prophet, who takes his stand on the ethical character of religion, replies in the name of Jehovah: "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. . . . Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow."

After this indignant rejection of a splendid ceremonial service that was not associated with holiness of heart and life, the Lord is represented, in the next paragraph, as tenderly pleading with the people. "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land; but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

When it quickly appears that this tender pleading is of no avail, the prophet breaks forth in lamentation and reproach: "How is the faithful city become an harlot! she that was full of judgment! righteousness lodged in her, but now murderers. Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water. Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards; they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them."

This discourse, well ordered in all its parts, concludes with a menace of judgment, by which the evil-doers of the nation would be destroyed, and the people restored to their former loyalty to Jehovah. This judgment probably found its fulfilment, partly at least, in the war which the allied kings of Syria and Israel waged against Ahaz.

Other interesting passages in part first will be found indicated in the *research work* at the end of this chapter.

**Discourses of Doom.** — The second division of the prophecies of Isaiah is devoted, not to Judah and Israel, but to neighboring nations. As we have already learned, the Hebrew people belonged to a group of kingdoms which extended from Ethiopia to Assyria. At one time or another the children of Israel stood in close political or com-

mercial relations with them all. As the great prophet studies their character, and discerns their elements of weakness, he announces the destiny that severally awaits them.

The first of these doom discourses, as we may call them, is directed against Babylon. For its iniquity it is to be destroyed by the anger of the Lord. It is to be given over to utter desolation — a prediction that has been long since fulfilled. “And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans’ pride, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. It shall never be inhabited, neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation: neither shall the Arabian pitch tent there; neither shall shepherds make their flocks to lie down there. But wild beasts of the desert shall lie there; and their houses shall be full of doleful creatures; and ostriches shall dwell there, and he-goats shall dance there. And wolves shall cry in their castles, and jackals in the pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.”<sup>1</sup>

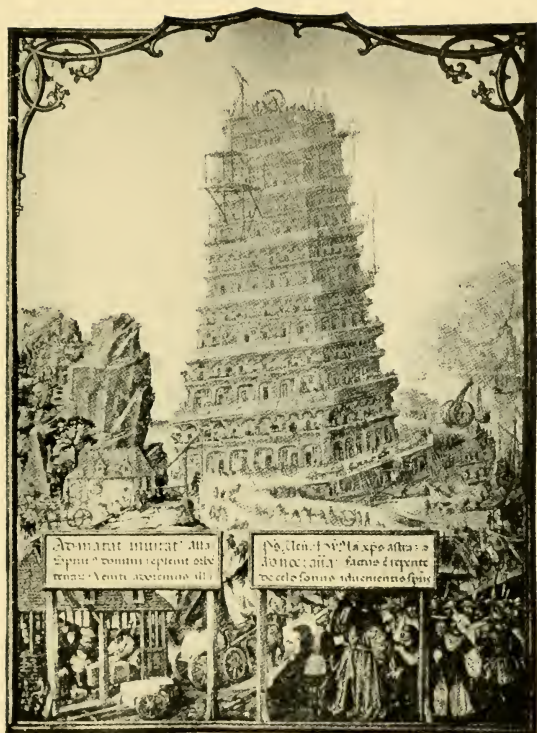
This is a type of the dooms pronounced in succession against Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Egypt, Arabia, and Tyre.

**Return from Exile.** — The next four sections are passed over with mere mention. Their general character has already been pointed out. The historical section (chapters 36–39) differs but little from the corresponding narrative in 2 Kings (chapters 18–20), from which it was evidently taken. It deals with Sennacherib’s demand for the surrender of Jerusalem, Hezekiah’s illness and cure, and other events in which Isaiah was concerned.

The final section (chapters 40–66) is one of great interest. It is a single sustained discourse relating to *Israel’s*

<sup>1</sup> Is. 13: 19–22.





TOWER OF BABEL





*restoration from Babylonian captivity.* The nature of the prophecy, as well as its peculiarity of style, shows that it is of later date than the preceding parts of the book. Though formerly supposed to be the work of Isaiah, it is now generally conceded by our ablest biblical scholars that it comes from another and later hand. This later author, whose extraordinary ability is recognized by all competent students, is sometimes referred to as "the Great Unknown."

This lengthy discourse may be divided into three parts, which together make one great forcible presentation of truth. First of all the prophet emphasizes (chapters 40-48) the *certainly of the coming release from exile*. This certainty is based on the power and promises of Jehovah. Cyrus is named as the divine instrument of deliverance, — a fact showing that God has His agents, not alone among the Chosen People, but also among the Gentile nations.

The second part (chapters 49-59) of this final discourse is an exhortation to moral fitness for the restoration and future glory of Israel. This exhortation is accompanied by glowing passages of promise and encouragement. "Sing, O Heavens," exclaims the prophet, "and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the Lord hath comforted His people, and will have compassion upon His afflicted."<sup>1</sup>

**The Servant of the Lord.** — Nowhere else in the prophetic writings do we reach greater depths of spiritual insight than in this part of Isaiah. For the first time we are brought face to face with a marvellous divine law, which has been operative in all ages of human history. That law is the omnipresent fact of vicarious suffering, of triumph through defeat, of blessings in the guise of sorrows, of the higher attained through the death of the

<sup>1</sup> Is. 49: 13.

lower. In the famous fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which stands out with startling distinctness in the writings of the Old Testament, this law is clearly presented.

In the closing verses of the fifty-second chapter and throughout the fifty-third chapter, Israel is individualized as the servant of the Lord. With a sublime play of the prophet's imagination, the nations are made to inquire, as they dwell on Israel's history, "Who hath believed that which we have heard? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and as one from whom men hide their face he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

But what is it that the servant of the Lord has accomplished in all his lowliness, deformity, and suffering? The nations are again represented as discerning the world significance of Israel's redemptive mission: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes are we healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

And what is to be the ultimate outcome of all this humiliation and suffering for Israel? The Lord Himself gives the answer, announcing the triumph of suffering: "Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. Like as many were as-

tonished at thee (his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men), so shall he sprinkle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they understand." <sup>1</sup>

All this has found its highest fulfilment in the gospel of Christ. His life is a perfect exemplification of the law of vicarious suffering — of salvation through death. And hence Christian writers have made no mistake in transferring the language of the great unknown prophet to the Saviour of mankind. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is the most perfect statement of evangelical truth to be found in the Old Testament.

**Triumphant Faith.** — In one point Isaiah and "the Great Unknown" are alike. Whatever may be their menace of righteous judgment for sin, there is always a word of hope for the final results. Their faith in God is always triumphant. In the midst of words of judgment against Israel and Judah, we find this picture of the universal prevalence of Israel's religion: "And it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. . . . And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." <sup>2</sup>

In like manner the nameless prophet closes his discourse with a picture of Israel's future glory. Beyond the approaching restoration through the magnanimity of Cyrus, there lies a golden age for Zion: "The nations shall see

<sup>1</sup> Is. 52: 13-15.

<sup>2</sup> Is. 2: 2, 4.

thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of beauty in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God."<sup>1</sup>

**Poetic Gifts.** — The admirable intellectual gifts of Isaiah have been shown in the passages quoted. No other writer of the Old Testament surpasses him in mental vigor and emotional power. His discourses often exhibit a rare eloquence, in which logical thought is enriched by poetic imagery. In the words of Driver: "Isaiah's poetical genius is superb. His characteristics are grandeur and beauty of conception, wealth of imagination, vividness of illustration, compressed energy and splendor of diction."<sup>2</sup> Almost any discourse of Isaiah may be cited in illustration.

**Jeremiah.** — About seventy years after the death of Isaiah, the prophetic call came to Jeremiah, the second of the great prophets of Israel. As we are informed in the opening statements of his prophecy, this call came to him in the thirteenth year (626 B.C.) of King Josiah, and continued for nearly fifty years through the subsequent reigns of Jehoiakim and Zedekiah. His heroic voice was not silenced till the people whom he had tried to save were carried away by Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Is. 62: 2, 3.

<sup>2</sup> S. R. Driver, "Literature of the Old Testament," p. 227.

### <sup>3</sup> CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF IMPORTANT EVENTS

B.C.

626. Call of Jeremiah.

621. Discovery of Deuteronomy, and Josiah's reformation.

609. Jehoahaz.

608. Jehoiakim.

597. Jehoiachin, and first siege of Jerusalem.

596. Zedekiah.

586. Destruction of Jerusalem, and second deportation of Jewish exiles.

When the prophetic call came to him, his sensitive nature recoiled from the heavy task laid upon him. "Ah, Lord God! behold," he exclaimed, "I cannot speak, for I am a child." But divine preparation, as in every age, came with the call. "Then the Lord put forth His hand, and touched my mouth; and the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth: see, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, and to destroy and to overthrow; to build, and to plant."<sup>1</sup>

**Heroic Character.**—Jeremiah was placed in an exceedingly trying position; but in the presence of difficulty and danger he displayed a heroic spirit. It was his thankless task to reprove the people of Judah for their sins, and to announce to them, in the absence of repentance and reformation, the impending destruction at the hands of their enemies. This message he proclaimed with tireless faithfulness.

In the twenty-sixth chapter we have a graphic portrayal of Jeremiah's preaching and its dangerous results. He took his stand in the court of the temple; and to the crowds gathering there from all parts of Judah, he declared, "Thus saith the Lord: if ye will not hearken to Me, to walk in My law, which I have set before you, . . . then will I make this house like Shiloh,<sup>2</sup> and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth."

<sup>1</sup> Jer. 1:9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> "Shiloh lay about thirty miles straight north of Jerusalem; and though once the national sanctuary, famous from the memories of Eli and the great prophet Samuel, had been in ruins for five hundred years. To predict a similar fate for the magnificent building in whose courts they stood, was more than the priests and prophets, or the crowd, could endure."—GEIKIE, "Hours with the Bible," Vol. V., p. 326.



This denunciation of the unfaithfulness of the people, and this prediction of coming disaster, greatly enraged the priests. They laid violent hands on the bold prophet, dragged him before a court of the princes, and declared him worthy of death. When Jeremiah was permitted to speak a word in his own defence, the fearless heroism of the prophet asserted itself. There was no shirking of responsibility, and no softening of his message. "The Lord sent me," he said, "to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the Lord your God; and the Lord will repent Him of the evil that He hath pronounced against you. But as for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as is good and right in your eyes." It is to the honor of the princes that, closing their ears to priestly clamors, they pronounced the prophet guiltless.

**Human Weakness.**—Yet with all his heroism in the presence of death, Jeremiah was only human. He was repeatedly persecuted, put in stocks, and cast into prison. His message was unheeded, and he himself was made a laughing-stock; and if, under these discouraging circumstances, he attempted to keep silent, his conscience became a torture. "And if I say," he complains, "that I will not speak any more in His name, then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones."<sup>1</sup>

In his sore tribulations within and without, he fell into the gloom of Job. Life became a grievous burden; and like the Arabian chieftain, Jeremiah lamented his birth. "Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed."<sup>2</sup> Yet this despair was only a passing mood; and throughout his long

<sup>1</sup> Jer. 20:9.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. 20:14.

career as a public preacher, he never proved faithless to his calling.

**Prophecies Written.**—In the thirty-sixth chapter we have an interesting account of the original writing of Jeremiah's prophecies. There are few prophetic writings in regard to which this information is so definite. In the fourth year of Jehoiakim (604 B.C.), after the prophet had been preaching for nearly a quarter of a century, he was moved to commit his discourses to writing. Their oral delivery had not been attended with the reformation desired and hoped for; accordingly he conceived the idea that they might be more effective in written form. "It may be," the Lord is made to say, "that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may turn every man from his evil way."

Calling Baruch, his friend and disciple, to act as scribe, Jeremiah dictated to him the substance of his long series of discourses. The prophet then directed Baruch to read "the words of the Lord" in the temple. When the matter was reported to the princes, they summoned the scribe to read the roll in their presence. The princes were touched by the eloquent denunciations and affectionate pleadings of the prophet, "and they told all the words in the ears of the king."

The king ordered the roll to be brought; but when it was read in his presence, his proud heart was stirred with anger, and seizing the roll, he slashed it with his knife and cast it into the fire. He gave orders for the seizure of the daring prophet and scribe; but foreseeing danger, they had prudently concealed themselves. But the prophet's tongue could not be silenced; and in spite of the king's anger, he dictated his prophecies a second time; "and there were added besides unto them many like words."

It is this second roll or book that no doubt forms the basis of the present prophecies of Jeremiah. The arrangement has been changed, and many other subsequent discourses have been added. It is to be regretted that the discourses are not arranged in chronological order; but in most cases, through direct statement or incidental historical reference, we are able to determine the time and occasion of the prophet's words.

**Prophetic Message.** — Jeremiah is a fine embodiment of the Hebrew prophetic spirit. His mission was definite and limited; but within the scope of his work he was faithful, indefatigable, and courageous. Sin and judgment — these were the two principal themes of his discourses, which were repeated, illustrated, and enforced in a great variety of forms.

He was filled with the spirit of the book of Deuteronomy. Indeed, after the discovery of the law in the temple and the inauguration of reforms under Josiah, Jeremiah was sent on a preaching tour throughout the cities of Judah. In the eleventh chapter we have the burden of his preaching, in which the spirit of the Deuteronomist will be readily recognized: "And the Lord said unto me, A conspiracy is found among the men of Judah, and among the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They are turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers; and they are gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken My covenant which I made with their fathers. Therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will bring evil upon them, which they shall not be able to escape; and they shall cry unto Me, but I will not hearken unto them." This is the substance of the message repeated again and again.

**Conditional Prophecy.** — Yet Jeremiah's denunciation of

woes upon Judah was never unconditional. Through repentance and reformation there was always a way of escape. This is made perfectly plain in the eighteenth chapter, in which the relation of Jehovah to His people is compared to that of a potter and his work. "At what instant," the Lord is made to say, "I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them."

Of course the reverse of this divine attitude is true. "And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in My sight, that it obey not My voice, then will I repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them." It will be observed that this double principle is operative to-day through the processes of natural law.

**Captivity Predicted.**—For many years the evils predicted for Judah remained somewhat indefinite. The prophet went no farther than to name a foe from the north. But after the great battle of Carchemish in 604 B.C., at which Nebuchadnezzar won a decisive victory over Pharaoh-Necho of Egypt, the clear-visioned prophet discerned the pre-eminence which Babylon was to achieve. He recognized the sources from which the downfall of Judah was to come.

Accordingly, in the twenty-fifth chapter, Jeremiah specifically predicts the coming overthrow of Judah. "Because ye have not heard My words," he represents the Lord as saying, "I will send unto Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon, My servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about; and I will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and

perpetual desolations. Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle."

**Restoration.** — But the gaze of the prophet extended beyond the captivity. He predicted the length of its continuance. "These nations," he declared, "shall serve the King of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the King of Babylon and that nation for their iniquity."<sup>1</sup>

So confident was Jeremiah of the future restoration of his people that even during the siege of Jerusalem he bought a piece of land in his native town of Anathoth, and took extraordinary precautions to preserve the title-deed till the evil days might be passed. The whole transaction is detailed in the thirty-second chapter, and affords a pleasing glimpse of the business methods of that age. After the terms of purchase had been agreed on with his uncle, the prophet "subscribed the deed, and sealed it, and called witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances." Afterwards the deed was placed in an earthen vessel, that it might "continue many days."

**The New Covenant.** — What is still more remarkable, the prophet discerned the spiritual regeneration that was to follow the captivity. Through the fiery trials of defeat and captivity, the people of Israel were to be purified and lifted to a nobler spiritual life. The outward covenant of the law was to be replaced by a new covenant of the heart. Of this new spiritual covenant, which consisted in a love of truth and righteousness, there was to be no end.

<sup>1</sup> Jer. 25: 12.



The new covenant is one of the mountain tops of prophetic insight and inspiration. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they broke, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord.

"But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord: I will put My law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people; and they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them." <sup>1</sup>

**Prophecies of Doom.**—Like the book of Isaiah, Jeremiah contains a number of prophecies of doom (chapters 46-51). These prophecies are directed against the various nations that were in some way related to the people of Israel. Among these are Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Ammon, and Babylon.

The prophecy against Babylon is particularly impassioned. It is characterized by an implacable Hebrew resentment. "And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwelling-place for jackals, an astonishment and an hissing, without inhabitant. . . . Her cities are become a desolation, a dry land, and a desert, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby." <sup>2</sup>

**Last Years.**—When, in 586 B.C., Jerusalem was captured by Nebuchadnezzar, the prophet Jeremiah was treated with distinction. His prophecies were not un-

<sup>1</sup> Jer. 31: 31-34.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. 51: 37, 43.



known to the Babylonian conqueror. He was granted his freedom, and given permission to choose his place of abode.

A little later he was forced by the leaders of the people, who feared vengeance for the assassination of the Babylonian governor Gedaliah, to accompany them to Egypt. The prophet had opposed the expedition. During his sojourn at Tahpanhes, he foretold the doom of Egypt. Here he disappears from the sacred writings; but an old tradition relates that he was stoned to death.

The fate of Jeremiah was that of many other heroic men since his day. His brave, unselfish life was met with indifference, persecution, and suffering. It is probable, as we have just seen, that he died a martyr's death. Yet he had scarcely passed away, when the fulfilment of his prophecies established the inspired greatness of the man, and by a quick popular reaction he was exalted to a position of high honor. His prophecies were diligently studied by the exiles in Babylon; and ever since he has been esteemed as one of the greatest of Hebrew seers.

**Lamentations.** — The brief book of Lamentations is commonly accredited to Jeremiah. Though his authorship of the book has been seriously questioned by some recent scholars, it rests on a very old tradition. In 2 Chronicles (35 : 25) Jeremiah is referred to as the author of an elegy or lamentation on Josiah, — a fact showing that this style of composition was not foreign to him. The book dates from his age; and in the absence of positive proof to the contrary, we may accept the ancient tradition as probably true.

The general theme of Lamentations is the evil that befell Jerusalem and Judah after their overthrow by Nebuchadnezzar. The contents of the book show that it was

written not long after that event. It is made up of five separate poems, which are all notably artificial in structure. The successive stanzas begin with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in regular order, thus making acrostic or abecedarian poems. As the Hebrew alphabet consists of twenty-two letters, each chapter, except the third, consists of twenty-two verses. In the third chapter, three successive stanzas begin with each Hebrew letter in order, thus making sixty-six in all.

**The Separate Poems.** — Though constructed in this artificial manner, the successive elegies or lamentations exhibit unusual literary excellence. We feel that the grief, in spite of its artificial expression, is deep and genuine. The poet has carefully wrought out, in artistic form and pathetic metaphor, his overwhelming sorrow for the misfortunes of Zion.

The first poem is a lament over the downfall and desolation of Jerusalem. Listen to the piteous outcry of its beginning: —

“How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people!

How is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations,

And princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary.

“She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks:

Among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her;

All her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies.

“The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts;

All her gates are desolate: her priests sigh,

Her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.”

With the usual spiritual insight of the ancient Hebrew, the poet traces the calamities of Zion to the sins of the people.

"Jerusalem hath grievously sinned," he declares, "therefore she is removed."<sup>1</sup>

The main theme of the second elegy is the anger of the Lord. There is a graphic picture of the desolation of Jerusalem, as if written by an eye-witness:—

"The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets:  
The virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword;  
Thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger; thou hast killed,  
and not pitied."

The third elegy laments the desolate condition of Jerusalem, but finds a ground of consolation in the goodness and mercy of Jehovah. The poet speaks in the name of the people:—

"It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because His  
compassions fail not.  
They are new every morning; great is thy faithfulness.  
The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in  
Him.

"The Lord is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that  
seeketh Him.  
It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the  
salvation of the Lord.  
It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth."

The remaining elegies are in the same mournful key. The present sad condition of Zion is heightened by a contrast with its former glory. The series of poems closes with a prayer that Jehovah should return to His people, and renew their former glory.

<sup>1</sup> Lam. 1: 8,

## RESEARCH WORK

## ISAIAH

- The great arraignment, Is. 1.  
The future preëminence of Jerusalem, Is. 2 : 2-4.  
The parable of the vineyard, Is. 5 : 1-7.  
Denunciation of woes and judgment, Is. 5 : 8-30.  
The prophet's call, Is. 6.  
Strophic denunciation of Israel, with refrain, Is. 9 : 8-10 : 4.  
The ideal prince of David's line, Is. 11 : 1-10.  
The doom of Babylon, Is. 13, 14.  
"The burden of Moab," Is. 15, 16.  
The doom of Egypt, Is. 19, 20.  
The overthrow of the city of Tyre, Is. 23.  
Picture of a world judgment, Is. 24-27.  
Various relations of Judah to Assyria, Is. 28-33.  
An address to women at ease, Is. 32 : 9-20.  
Eloquent contrast of Edom and Zion, Is. 34, 35.  
Historical section from 2 Kings, Is. 36-39.  
Israel's restoration from exile, Is. 40-66.  
    1. Its certainty, Is. 40-48.  
    2. Moral preparation for it, Is. 49-59.  
        Vicarious suffering, Is. 52 : 13-53.  
    3. Future felicity of Zion, Is. 60-66.

## JEREMIAH

- The call of Jeremiah, Jer. 1.  
The sins of Judah, and coming judgment, Jer. 2-6.  
Eloquent sermon in the temple, Jer. 7-9.  
Contrast between idols and Jehovah, Jer. 10.  
Discourse after the finding of the law, Jer. 11, 12.  
A symbolical prophecy, Jer. 13.  
Prophecy on the occasion of a drought, Jer. 14-17.  
Lessons from the potter, Jer. 18-19.  
Persecution and gloom, Jer. 20.  
The prophet consulted by the king, Jer. 21.  
Judgment of successive rulers, Jer. 22, 23.  
Good and bad figs, Jer. 24.  
The seventy years' captivity predicted, Jer. 25.

- Preaching and persecution, Jer. 26.  
Yokes employed in emblem prophecies, Jer. 27, 28.  
The prophet's letter to the captives in Babylon, Jer. 29.  
Israel's restoration from Babylon, Jer. 30-33.  
Prophecy and imprisonment, Jer. 37, 38.  
Jerusalem taken, and Jeremiah released, Jer. 39, 40.  
Murder of Gedaliah, Jer. 41.  
Enforced flight into Egypt, Jer. 42, 43.  
Idolatry and judgment in Egypt, Jer. 44.  
Various doom prophecies, Jer. 46-51.  
Historical supplement describing the capture of Jerusalem, Jer. 52.

#### LAMENTATIONS

- Desolation and misery of Jerusalem, Lam. 1.  
The Lord's anger against His people, Lam. 2.  
The nation's complaint and comfort, Lam. 3.  
The past and present of Zion, Lam. 4.  
A prayer for Jehovah's mercy, Lam. 5.

## CHAPTER XI

### STUDIES IN EZEKIEL AND DANIEL

**Peculiar Circumstances.**—The circumstances under which the prophecies of Ezekiel were written are peculiar. The prophet was a captive in a strange land; for he had been deported with Jehoiachim in 597 B.C. He resided at Tel-abib, on the river Chebar, in the midst of a considerable community of Hebrew exiles. He was married, as we learn incidentally, and resided in his own house.

Ezekiel was a priest, and therefore belonged to the aristocracy of his people. His office involved an extensive and accurate knowledge of Hebrew history and Hebrew law. He shared the deepest aspirations of the Chosen People. With profound and anxious sadness he must have dwelt on the former splendor of his nation, its present humiliation and suffering, and its future destiny.

**Prophetic Call.**—The prophetic call of Ezekiel came in a sublime vision. As narrated in the first chapter, he beheld the form of Jehovah enthroned on a firmament upheld by flaming cherubim. When, at the sight of the overpowering spectacle, he fell on his face, he heard a divine voice, which said: "Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against Me; they and their fathers have transgressed against Me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children, and stiff-hearted."<sup>1</sup>

The date of this vision and call is fixed definitely in the

<sup>1</sup> Ez. 2: 3, 4.



fourth month of the fifth year of Jehoiachim's captivity; hence in July, 592 B.C. It is the interval between the first and second capture of Jerusalem. Jeremiah is still living and preaching; and the course of political events is uncertain and alarming both to the exiles and to the residents of Judah. From this time, for twenty-two years, Ezekiel, speaking in the name of the Lord, continues to warn, instruct, and comfort his people.

**Threefold Division.**—The book of Ezekiel naturally falls into a threefold division. For a time the most significant event for the Hebrew people, whether at home or in captivity, is the impending destruction of Jerusalem. The first twenty-four chapters deal with this event in varied and impressive forms.

The second division (chapters 25–32) is concerned with other nations more or less closely associated with Israel. The fall of Jerusalem filled the Hebrews for a time with a paralyzing dejection. The fall of the capital and the captivity of the people seemed like a triumph of heathenism. But in the presence of this discouragement the prophet shows them that the triumph is only temporary, and that the proud nations about them are destined to fall under the mighty hand of Jehovah.

In the third division (chapters 33–48) the future restoration and glory of Israel are predicted with impressive imagery and deep spiritual insight. The chastening results of sorrow are recognized, and the richer spiritual life of the Hebrew people after the restoration is foretold in poetic language. The closing chapters are devoted to an imaginary reconstruction of the temple and to directions for its services.

It is thus seen that the book of Ezekiel is arranged in a systematic manner. Its authorship has never been

seriously questioned; and though its frequent symbolism is sometimes obscure, the book has had great influence in the subsequent development of the religious life and worship of the Jews.

**Sense of Responsibility.** — Ezekiel entered upon his task with a high sense of his responsibility. It is the responsibility of every great religious leader. Though for a time his dispiriting message was unwelcome to his fellow-exiles, he did not allow himself to sink into a selfish or cowardly silence.

It was a week after his call that he was made to understand the responsibility of his position. "The word of the Lord," he says, "came unto me, saying, Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from Me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul." <sup>1</sup>

**Judgment for Sin.** — Ezekiel clearly foresees the impending doom of Jerusalem. He foretells it in plain language; he portrays it in symbolical acts. In the fourth chapter he lays a mimic siege to Jerusalem; and in the fifth chapter, through the symbolism of his shaven hair, he sets forth the destruction of the people.

Like the other Hebrew prophets, he traces the disasters of Judah to the sins of the people. The past history of Jerusalem is portrayed in very dark colors: —

<sup>1</sup> Ez. 3: 16-19.

"I have set her in the midst of the nations  
And countries are round about her.  
And she hath changed my judgments into wickedness more than the nations,  
And my statutes more than the countries that are round about her ;  
For they have refused my judgments and my statutes,  
They have not walked in them."

And what is to be the result of this wickedness? Here is the declaration of judgment :—

"Therefore thus saith the Lord God : Behold, I, even I, am against thee,  
And will execute judgments in the midst of thee  
In the sight of the nations.  
And I will do in thee that which I have not done,  
And whereunto I will not do any more the like,  
Because of all thine abominations.  
Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee,  
And the sons shall eat the fathers ; and I will execute judgments in thee,  
And the whole remnant of thee will I scatter into all the winds."<sup>1</sup>

Sometimes, as in chapter six, the coming destruction of Israel is portrayed in language of poetic eloquence.

**Heredity and Righteousness.**—The Jews of the captivity, it appears, were inclined to attribute their misfortunes to the sins of their fathers. They were accustomed to quote the proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." This was a self-complacent assertion of their own righteousness; for by "the children" they meant themselves. The same proverb had been used in connection with the preaching of Jeremiah.<sup>2</sup>

This proverb contains an important truth; namely, that children often suffer for the sins of their parents. This is

<sup>1</sup> Ez. 5 : 5-10.

<sup>2</sup> See Jer. 31 : 29.

frequently seen in the transmitted taints of heredity. But this law is not inevitable in its consequences, and cannot be adduced as an impeachment of the justice of Jehovah. It is only when children continue in the iniquity of their parents that retribution follows in all its force. The evil results of heredity may be counteracted by righteousness, and every man, in spite of inherited evil, sustains a relation of individual responsibility before God.

This truth Ezekiel announces very clearly and forcibly to his self-complacent countryman :—

“Ye say, why ? doth not the son bear the iniquity of the father ?  
When the son hath done that which is lawful and right,  
And hath kept all My statutes, and hath done them, he shall surely live.

The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father,

Neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son :

The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him,

And the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him.

But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed,

And keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right,

He shall surely live, he shall not die.

All his transgressions that he hath committed,

They shall not be mentioned unto him :

In his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.

Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die ? ”<sup>1</sup>

**A Picture of War.**— Among the doom prophecies those against Tyre and Egypt are elaborate and striking. A wealth of detail is made splendid by poetic imagination. In the twenty-sixth chapter there is an instructive portrayal of Oriental warfare: we behold its varied implements and its unsparing cruelties. Nebuchadnezzar is to be sent against the proud city of Tyre,—

<sup>1</sup>Ez. 18 : 19-23. See also 33 : 18-20.

“With horses, and with chariots,  
And with horsemen, and companies, and much people.  
And he shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field ;  
And he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee,  
And lift up the buckler against thee.  
And he shall set engines of war against thy walls,  
And with his axes he shall break down thy towers.  
By reason of the abundance of his horses their dust shall cover thee :  
Thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen,  
And of the wheels, and of the chariots,  
When he shall enter into thy gates,  
As men enter into a city wherein is made a breach.  
With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets :  
He shall slay thy people by the sword,  
And thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground.  
And they shall make a spoil of thy riches,  
And make a prey of thy merchandise ;  
And they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses :  
And they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust  
In the midst of the water.”

It is a noteworthy fact that the destruction of Tyre, as here predicted, did not take place — a fact acknowledged by Ezekiel in a later prophecy.<sup>1</sup> It was indeed besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, as the prophet had foreseen, for thirteen years, and its inland trade was destroyed ; but having no navy, the Babylonian monarch was not able to cut off its supplies by sea. Tyre continued to be a great commercial city till after its capture by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C.

**Restoration from Exile.** — The prophet's confidence in Jehovah forbade him to think of the exile as a permanent removal from the sacred soil of Judah. Even in the midst of his proclamation of judgment and destruction, he has a word of comfort for the people. He foresees a return of

<sup>1</sup> Ez. 29: 18.

the exiles to the city of David. He quotes the Lord as saying, —

“I will even gather you from the people,  
And assemble you out of the countries, where ye have been scattered,  
And I will give you the land of Israel.”<sup>1</sup>

In the third division of the prophecy the restoration is treated at considerable length. The purifying effect of the captivity is clearly announced; and when the people of Israel are thus healed of their idolatry, then they will be restored to their native land, which will flourish again like the garden of the Lord.

“Thus saith the Lord:

In the day that I shall have cleansed you of all your iniquities,

I will also cause you to dwell in the cities,

And the waste shall be builded.

And the desolate land shall be tilled,

Whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by.

And they shall say,

This land that was desolate and ruined is become like the garden of Eden;

And the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced,

And are inhabited.”<sup>2</sup>

The prophet describes the regenerated Israel of the restoration. The religious life of the people will be something more than outward formalism; it will be a religion of the heart and life. Though, as a priest, Ezekiel naturally attached importance to the ritualistic services of the temple, he discerned, as a prophet, the essential need of spiritual worship.

“A new heart also will I give you,  
And a new spirit will I put within you;  
And I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh.

<sup>1</sup> Ez. 11: 17.

<sup>2</sup> Ez. 36: 33-35.



And I will put My Spirit within you,  
And cause you to walk in My statutes,  
And ye shall keep My judgments, and do them.  
And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers;  
And ye shall be My people, and I will be your God.”<sup>1</sup>

**A Remarkable Vision.** — More than any other of the greater prophets, Ezekiel makes use of symbol and parable. Perhaps the most striking of all the symbols he uses is the vision of the valley of dry bones,<sup>2</sup> by which he seeks to infuse hope and courage into the hearts of the dejected exiles. With their kingdom destroyed and the people scattered among the nations, it was difficult for them to believe the glorious things predicted of their return to Jerusalem.

The prophet was carried in spirit to a valley which was filled with bleaching bones, the relics of some fierce day of slaughter. It seemed impossible that these ghastly relics of mortality should live again. Yet, when the prophet spoke in obedience to the divine command, there was a mighty stir of life throughout the plain, and at length the skeleton host stood clothed in all the attributes of life.

Then came the interpretation of the startling vision: “Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel: behold, they say, Our bones are dried, and our hope is lost: we are cut off for our parts. Therefore prophesy and say unto them, —

“Thus saith the Lord God:  
Behold, O My people, I will open your graves,  
And cause you to come out of your graves,  
And bring you into the land of Israel.”

**Gog and Magog.** — The prophet’s gaze, sweeping beyond the approaching restoration, penetrates far into the future. Under the mighty imagery of war (chapters 38, 39) he fore-

<sup>1</sup> Ez. 36: 28. See also 11: 18-20.

<sup>2</sup> Ez. 37.

tells the triumph of Jehovah over the assembled nations of the earth. His graphic descriptions seem to be based on an earlier Scythian invasion, the terrors of which still lingered as a tradition in western Asia.

Under the leadership of Gog, a haughty prince, a mighty host is represented as invading the peaceful and unprotected land of Israel. In their greed for booty they come on "like a storm," and cover the land "like a cloud." But the Lord's people are not to be destroyed. In wrath Jehovah rises against the enemy.

"And I will call for a sword against him  
Throughout all My mountains, saith the Lord God ;  
Every man's sword shall be against his brother.  
And I will plead against him with pestilence and blood :  
And I will rain upon him, and upon his bands,  
And upon the many people that are with him,  
An overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.  
Thus will I magnify Myself, and sanctify Myself ;  
And I will be known in the eyes of many nations,  
And they shall know that I am the Lord." <sup>1</sup>

**Characteristics.** — Some of the leading features of Ezekiel's genius have already been brought out. He was not a great public preacher like Isaiah and Jeremiah ; his prophecies were delivered chiefly to small groups of exiles who assembled at his house at Tel-abib. His vigorous imagination made extensive use of symbol and parable and vision ; yet he often lacked the poetic sensibility that imparts warmth and beauty to discourse. He was a patient writer rather than fiery orator ; and no other prophet shows so great a familiarity with the earlier Hebrew writings. He borrows not only from various books of the Pentateuch, but also from the writings of Isaiah, Hosea, and Jeremiah.

<sup>1</sup> Ez. 38 : 21-23.

He was not to be a part of the restoration, with hopes of which he had comforted his fellow-captives. He was destined to end his days in a strange land. He must have lived much in memories of the past. In the words of Geikie: "He could only betake himself to the regions of fancy and memory, and call up a vision of the temple, and its services he loved so well, now lost to him forever. Nor did a general picture before his imagination content him. With a passionate devotion to exactness in ritual that marks the character of his mind, he almost anticipates Ezra in the importance he attaches to the minutest ecclesiastical details."<sup>1</sup>

**Daniel.** — The book of Daniel, when viewed in a proper light, is one of the grandest and most impressive in the Old Testament. In its largeness of view, it comprehends the rise and fall of empires, and clearly recognizes the divine agency that reaches forth from the invisible world to direct the destiny of nations. When Daniel, through "a night vision," understands Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the colossal image, he breaks forth in a psalm of praise: —

"Blessed be the name of God forever and ever:  
For wisdom and might are His:  
And He changeth the times and seasons;  
He removeth kings, and setteth up kings."<sup>2</sup>

This is his fundamental belief; and on that foundation he builds up his great message of encouragement to his people. His faith is simply repeated by the American poet who declares that, —

"Behind the dim unknown  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above His own."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Geikie, "Hours with the Bible," Vol. V., p. 428.

<sup>2</sup> Dan. 2: 20, 21.

<sup>3</sup> Lowell, "The Present Crisis."

**Authorship.** — In order to a right understanding of the book of Daniel, it is important to know when and by whom it was written. The prevailing view of modern biblical scholarship places the author in the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.). The prophet was a devout and faithful Jew of Palestine, who brought in this book a mighty message of encouragement to his downtrodden and suffering people. He placed his message in the mouth of Daniel, an honored name in Hebrew tradition,<sup>1</sup> and expressed in the form of visions and historic incidents, as in parables, the weighty spiritual truths, which it might have been dangerous, under the dominion of a pagan tyrant, to utter in an open manner.

When viewed in this light, the book of Daniel is found to possess a new and deeper significance. It becomes one of the most powerful prophetic appeals ever addressed to a troubled and suffering age. "It is written," to use the words of McFadyen, "at white heat amid the fires of persecution, and it is inspired by a passionate faith in God and in the triumph of His kingdom over the cruel and powerful kingdoms of the world. Its object was to sustain the tried and tempted faith of the loyal Jews under the fierce assault made upon it by Antiochus Epiphanes. Never before had there been so awful a crisis in Jewish history. In 586 the temple had been destroyed, but that was practically only an incident in or a consequence of the destruction of the city; but Antiochus had made a deliberate attempt to exterminate the Jewish religion. It was to console and strengthen the faithful in this crisis that the book was written."<sup>2</sup>

**The Older View.** — The older view, which made Daniel the author as well as the hero, and thus placed the date of

<sup>1</sup> See Ez. 14 : 14.

<sup>2</sup> McFadyen, "Introduction to the Old Testament," p. 329.

the book in the sixth century before Christ, is attended with many and serious difficulties, only a few of which can be here mentioned. This view, in large measure, destroys the value of the book as a prophetic message to the author's contemporaries. It is written in the language of western Syria, — a fact inconsistent with its composition in Babylon. It contains a large number of Persian words, which indicate a period subsequent to the Babylonian monarchy. It contains also several Greek words — *herald*, *harp*, *psaltery*, *symphony* — which point to a time following the conquests of Alexander the Great.

But more important than these linguistic considerations are several historical inaccuracies that would have been impossible to a contemporary author. It is tolerably certain — for instance, that Nebuchadnezzar, contrary to the opening statement of Daniel, did not capture Jerusalem “in the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim” (605 B.C.). As we have already learned from other parts of the Old Testament, the Babylonian conqueror first captured Jerusalem and deported a part of its inhabitants in 597 B.C. in the reign of Jehoiachin. Again Belshazzar is represented as the son of Nebuchadnezzar and last king of Babylon. As a matter of fact, Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon, and his son Belsharusur, or Belshazzar, was in no way related to Nebuchadnezzar. Furthermore, the conqueror of Babylon was Cyrus, and not “Darius the Median,” as stated in chapter 5 : 31.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>“All these reasons force us to recognize in Daniel the work of a pious and faithful Jew of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, who wished to encourage and strengthen his persecuted and suffering people through the promise that the kingdom of heaven was near at hand. These admonitions and prophecies he placed in the mouth of an inspired prophet of the time of the Babylonian exile, so that his work is a *pseudepigrapha*; but this course was an absolute necessity, if he was to be heard and if his message was to be heeded, since his age was thoroughly convinced that prophecy had ceased.” — CORNILL, “Einleitung in das Alte Testament,” p. 215.

**The Hero.** — Adopting the view, then, that the book of Daniel dates from the time of Antiochus Epiphanes (about 165 B.C.), we turn to the more pleasing task of discovering its separate messages; for its purpose is not historical but spiritual and practical. The career of its princely hero, as narrated in the first chapter, is a lesson in loyalty to Jehovah.

As a handsome and promising youth, Daniel was set apart, with three of his companions, to be educated in the language and learning of the Chaldeans. Though willing to be trained for the public service of the Babylonian monarchy, he remained faithful to the religion of Jehovah, and hence resolved "that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." And what was the outcome of this faithfulness? It was an edifying example at a time when Antiochus was employing the fulness of his power to draw or drive the Jews into apostasy. When, at the end of three years, Daniel was brought before Nebuchadnezzar, he was found "ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers." Fidelity to the religion of Judah did not go unrewarded.

**The Colossal Image.** — The book of Daniel is made up chiefly of narratives and visions, which in the form of impressive types or symbols are fraught with weighty lessons. These lessons, though suited to all ages and peoples, were peculiarly adapted to comfort and strengthen the Jews under the persecutions of Antiochus.

In the second chapter we have a dramatic account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a colossal image. Its head was of gold, the breast and arms of silver, the body of brass, the legs of iron, the feet of mixed iron and clay. As the king gazed upon the Titanic figure, a marvellous stone moved upon it, crushed it to powder, and after-



wards "became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth."

This vision, which might have well troubled the monarch's mind, the prophet interpreted before him. The image symbolized four great monarchies—the Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Grecian—which were to follow one another in stately succession upon the great stage of Asia. And the stone "cut out of the mountain without hands"? "In the days of these kings," explains the prophet, "shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever." To a people, whose religion was threatened by a furious monarch, this near approach and conquering power of the kingdom of heaven was a comforting and glorious truth.

**The Fiery Furnace.**—The third chapter contains an account of the marvellous deliverance of three faithful Hebrews—Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego—from a fiery furnace. Nebuchadnezzar had set up in the plain of Dura a huge image of gold. At its dedication, to which all the officials of the empire had been summoned, the people were commanded, when the music crashed forth, to fall down in idolatrous worship.

When the three faithful Hebrews refused obedience to the king's command, they were hurled into a furiously flaming furnace. But they were not consumed, for an angel walked at their side. At length the astonished monarch called them forth from the flames; and the lesson of the incident—the message which the author meant for his persecuted fellow-countrymen—is found in Nebuchadnezzar's own words, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent His angel, and de-

livered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god except their own God."

**Regal Pride Humbled.**—The fourth chapter teaches a lesson that the impious Antiochus would have done well to heed. But the truth embodied in Nebuchadnezzar's second vision is of universal application. It is thus stated by the author of Proverbs:—

"A man's pride shall bring him low;  
But he that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honor."<sup>1</sup>

In his dream the king of Babylon beheld a mighty tree in the midst of the earth; its top reached to heaven, and the birds found shelter in its widespreading branches. As the royal dreamer was wondering at the majestic tree, he heard a heavenly voice commanding that it be cut down. When the magicians and astrologers had tried in vain, the faithful Daniel made known the meaning of the vision. The tree symbolized Nebuchadnezzar himself in his pride and power; but he was to be brought low and driven for a time from human habitations till he had learned the great lesson "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will."

The fearful visitation of divine judgment came upon Nebuchadnezzar at the supreme moment of his self-conscious and boastful pride. As he walked upon the roof of his palace, and surveyed the grandeur of his capital, he exclaimed, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty?" Scarcely had he ceased speaking when his reason was taken from him. For seven years his mania—known as *lycanthropy*—drove

<sup>1</sup> Prov. 29 : 23.

him among the beasts of the field. At length his reason returned with a sense of his humble dependence on God. "And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the Most High, and I praised and honored Him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom from generation to generation : and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing ; and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth ; and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, what doest Thou?"

**Belshazzar's Feast.**—The story of Belshazzar's feast brought a comforting message to the Jews of the second century before Christ, who saw another impious monarch desecrating the sanctity of their temple with idolatrous worship. It assured them, in a narrative of tragic power, that sacrilege is attended with divine judgment. They were thus encouraged to look forward to the speedy humiliation of a blasphemous king, who had forbidden the worship of Jehovah and set up an altar to Zeus in the sacred temple.

The incidents of the feast are known to all. While Belshazzar, with a great company of courtiers, was drinking wine out of the golden vessels taken from the temple at Jerusalem, a mysterious hand reached forth from invisibility, and wrote strange words upon the wall of the palace. No wonder that "the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another."

Once more Daniel is the interpreter, and boldly rebukes the king for his pride and sacrilege. After referring to the judgment sent upon Nebuchadnezzar for his pride, the prophet continues : "And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast

not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this; but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives and thy concubines, have drunk wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified: then was the part of the hand sent from Him; and this writing was written.

“And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.” And that same night, as the narrative concludes, Belshazzar, the king of the Chaldeans, was slain.

**In the Lion's Den.**—In the sixth chapter we have another striking narrative that admirably teaches an impressive lesson. While Antiochus was seeking to establish the Greek religion throughout his dominions, there were many defections from the Jewish faith. Apostasy from Judaism was a necessary step toward political or religious preferment. Under these circumstances the devout author of the book presents Daniel's splendid example of fidelity.

For the purpose of ensnaring Daniel, of whose pre-eminence they had become jealous, the Persian princes secured a decree from Darius “that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.” As the evil-minded princes had foreseen, Daniel disregarded the decree; and, “his windows being open in his chamber

toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime." According to the decree, which was unchangeable, the king, with great reluctance, ordered Daniel to be cast into the den of lions.

As is well known, the faithful hero was saved, for "God sent His angel, and shut the lions' mouths." The king was "exceeding glad" of his preservation; and he forthwith published a decree that contains the impressive moral of the story. "I make a decree," he wrote, "that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for He is the living God, and steadfast forever, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and His dominion shall be even unto the end. He delivereth and rescueth, and He worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."

**Various Visions.** — The first seven chapters of Daniel, as we have seen, are narrative in form; the rest of the book is occupied with the prophet's own visions, which deal with great national changes and the ultimate triumph of the kingdom of God. The vision of four beasts in chapter 7, which are explained to signify four kingdoms, is commonly understood to be parallel with Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the colossal image.

In chapter 8 a ram with two horns is furiously attacked by a goat "with a notable horn between his eyes." The angel Gabriel explains to the prophet that the ram symbolizes the Medo-Persian empire, and the goat the Grecian empire, its "notable horn" being clearly Alexander the Great. Afterwards follow the four kingdoms into which the empire of the Macedonian conqueror was divided. "And in the latter time of their kingdom,

when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power; and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper and do his pleasure: and he shall destroy the mighty ones and the holy people. And through his policy he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and in their security shall destroy many; he shall also stand up against the prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand." This impious king, as is generally recognized, can be no other than Antiochus Epiphanes.

The times and events of chapter 9 have given rise to different interpretations. The last two chapters deal with four kings of Persia, with Alexander the Great, and the fourfold division of his kingdom. In the eleventh chapter, from the twenty-first to the forty-fifth verse, the career of Antiochus Epiphanes is described with remarkable fulness and particularity. Though he is not named, there can be no mistaking his person. "He shall have regard unto them that forsake the holy covenant. And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall profane the sanctuary, even the fortress, and shall take away the continual burnt offering, and they shall set up the abomination that maketh desolate. And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he pervert by flatteries: but the people that know their God shall be strong, and do exploits."

**General Character.**—The book of Daniel, in some respects, stands apart from the other prophetic writings. The author does not speak in the name of Jehovah; we look in vain for his "thus saith the Lord." Yet, in the highest sense he has the inspired insight of the prophet and delivers the weighty message of the prophet. He



deals with great themes. From a lofty summit he surveys the movement of great empires, as they fulfil their age-long parts on the stage of history. "The prophets," as Driver says, "do not merely foretell history; they also *interpret* it. And the book of Daniel does this on a more comprehensive scale than any other prophetic book. It outlines a religious philosophy of history. It deals, not with a single empire, but with a succession of empires, showing how all form parts of a whole, ordained for prescribed terms by God, and issuing in results designed by Him." <sup>1</sup>

## RESEARCH WORK

### EZEKIEL

- Vision and call of the prophet, Ez. 1-3.
- Mimic siege and other symbols, Ez. 4, 5.
- Discourse against the land of Judah, Ez. 6, 7.
- Guilt and judgment of Jerusalem, Ez. 8-11.
- An emblem prophecy, Ez. 12: 1-16.
- A condemnation of false prophets, Ez. 13.
- Parable of the vine, Ez. 15.
- Parable of an adulterous woman, Ez. 16.
- Parable of the eagle and the cedar, Ez. 17.
- Heredity and responsibility, Ez. 18.
- Emblem prophecy of the sword, Ez. 21.
- The guilt of Jerusalem, Ez. 22.
- Parable of Aholah and Aholibah, Ez. 23.
- Parable of the caldron, Ez. 24: 1-14.
- Death of the prophet's wife, Ez. 24: 15-27.
- The doom of Tyre, Ez. 26-28.
- A group of prophecies against Egypt, Ez. 26-28.
- The selfish shepherds of Israel, Ez. 34.
- Vision of the valley of dry bones, Ez. 37.
- Prophecy against Gog of Magog, Ez. 38-39.
- Vision of Jerusalem restored, Ez. 40-48.

<sup>1</sup> Driver, "Literature of the Old Testament," p. 512.

## DANIEL

- Faithfulness blessed and rewarded, Dan. 1.
- Dream of a colossal image, Dan. 2.
- Deliverance from a fiery furnace, Dan. 3.
- Dream of a mighty tree, Dan. 4.
- Belshazzar's feast, Dan. 5.
- The prophet in the lions' den, Dan. 6.
- Vision of the four beasts, Dan. 7.
- Vision of the ram and goat, Dan. 8.
- The time of the restoration, Dan. 9.
- The time of the end, Dan. 10-12.

## CHAPTER XII

### STUDIES IN THE EARLIER MINOR PROPHETS

**Minor Prophets.** — The minor prophets — Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi — are twelve in number. They are called minor prophets not because their message is less weighty than that of the major prophets, but because it is briefer. The combined writings of the minor prophets make a smaller volume than the book of Isaiah.

It is unfortunate that the arrangement of the minor prophets in our Bibles does not follow a chronological order. Amos, whose career dates from the middle of the eighth century before our era, is undoubtedly the oldest of all the prophetic writers. He antedates Isaiah by several years, yet he is placed third among the minor prophets. Joel, though one of the latest of the minor prophets, is placed second; and Hosea, though prophesying after Amos, opens the list. There are, as we shall discover later, still other departures from a chronological arrangement.

**Relation to the New Testament.** — The minor prophets, with their varied messages, are frequently quoted in the New Testament. In some cases there is no direct prediction; the New Testament writers merely adopt the earlier statements as apt or interesting illustrations.<sup>1</sup> Our

<sup>1</sup> "It is admitted that the sense put by the New Testament writers on much of the Old Testament which they quote is not the true historical sense, *i.e.* not the sense which the original writers, prophets, or wise men had in their mind." DAVIDSON, "Old Testament Theology," p. 22.

Saviour sometimes used the spiritual truth announced by the prophets, and by an apt quotation closed the mouths of His antagonists. In other cases there is a claim of the fulfilment of earlier predictions.

A few examples will make all this plain. In Hosea (11:1) Jehovah, in recounting the early history of the Hebrew people, is represented as saying, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." It is not a prediction of a *future* event, but a statement of a *past* event. But the evangelist seizes upon this statement of the prophet as furnishing an illustration or parallel of the flight of Joseph into Egypt; and accordingly he writes: "And he arose and took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt did I call My son."<sup>1</sup>

In the sixth chapter of Hosea, the prophet rebukes Israel for formalism and iniquity. With true spiritual insight he declares in the name of Jehovah, "I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings." This statement of truth Jesus employs with irresistible effect against the carping Pharisees, who in their excessive devotion to outward observances complained of the violation of the Sabbath by the disciples. "If ye had known," He answered, "what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless."<sup>2</sup>

In foretelling the future glory of Israel, the prophet Micah had said, —

"But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah,  
Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah,  
Yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel."

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 2: 14, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 12: 7.

This prediction was understood among the Jews to refer to the coming Messiah. Accordingly, when Herod inquired of the priests and scribes "where Christ should be born," they answered without hesitation: "In Bethlehem of Judæa: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel."<sup>1</sup>

**Hosea.** — Hosea, of whom little is known further than his father's name, was a prophet of Israel during the period immediately preceding the fall of the northern kingdom. He was married to a faithless wife; and his love and kindness to her he employed symbolically to set forth the gracious attitude of Jehovah to Israel. From the list of kings in the opening verse, we are able to fix the date of his prophecies, which cover the long period of about half a century.

As may be seen from the narratives in 2 Kings, particularly the fifteenth chapter, the prophet lived in a period of anarchy. Murder repeatedly opened the way to the throne. Shallum, who had obtained the kingdom by conspiracy and assassination, reigned but a month. He was slain by Menahem, who maintained himself for ten years through the support of Tiglathpilezer of Assyria. This support was procured through the payment of a burdensome tribute.<sup>2</sup> Under Hoshea, who ascended the throne

<sup>1</sup> Matt. 2: 6.

<sup>2</sup>       KINGS OF ISRAEL CONTEMPORARY WITH HOSEA

B.C. 786. Jeroboam II.  
 746. Zechariah.  
 745. Shallum.  
 745. Menahem.  
 737. Pekabiah.  
 735. Pekah.  
 733. Hoshea.  
 722. Fall of Samaria.

about the time Hosea's prophecies ceased, the northern kingdom came to its end (722 B.C.).

**Religious Conditions.** — As might be expected, this anarchic period was characterized by great moral and religious decadence. In the seventeenth chapter of 2 Kings, we have a full statement of the transgressions and idolatries of the people. Hosea's arraignment of Israel is a strong, comprehensive indictment:—

“Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel:  
For the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land,  
Because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the  
land.  
By swearing, and lying,  
And killing, and stealing, and committing adultery,  
They break out, and blood toucheth blood.”

The mission of Hosea was to call his people to repentance and reformation. He urged upon them the goodness of Jehovah; he reminded them of the gracious providences of their previous history; but, at the same time, he announced the woes that would certainly follow impenitent sin:—

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge:  
Because thou hast rejected knowledge,  
I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to Me:  
Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God,  
I will also forget thy children.  
As they were increased, so they sinned against Me:  
Therefore will I change their glory into shame.”

**Two Parts.** — The book of Hosea naturally falls into two parts. The first part (chapters 1-3) belongs to the reign of Jeroboam; the second part (chapters 4-14) contains a summary of Hosea's prophetic discourses under the reigns of subsequent kings. The first part is devoted to a symboli-



cal act, or, as some think, a symbolical vision, by which Israel's unfaithfulness is represented. The unfaithful spouse of the prophet is emblematic of Israel. But the Lord will not cast off His faithless people forever, but cleanse them from their iniquity : —

“Therefore, behold, I will allure her,  
And bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her,  
And I will give her her vineyards from thence,  
And the valley of Achor for a door of hope :  
And she shall sing then, as in the days of her youth,  
And as in the day when she came up out of the land of Egypt.”<sup>1</sup>

In the second part there are various statements of Israel's guilt and coming punishment. In the eleventh chapter the prophet, speaking in Jehovah's name, tenderly sets forth the divine love, but at the same time clearly announces the coming disasters at the hand of Assyria : —

“When Israel was a child, then I loved him,  
And called My son out of Egypt.  
As they called them, so they went from them :  
They sacrificed unto Baalim, and burnt incense to graven images.  
I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms ;  
But they knew not that I healed them.

\* \* \* \* \*

“He shall not return into the land of Egypt,  
But the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return.  
And the sword shall abide on his cities.  
And shall consume his branches, and devour them.”

**Message of Hope.** — Like the other prophets whom we have studied, Hosea has a message of hope for his people. The captivity is to bring a blessing ; for it will teach them

<sup>1</sup> Hos. 2 : 14, 15.

not to worship "the work of their hands." In the last chapter Jehovah declares:—

"I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely :  
 For Mine anger is turned away from him.  
 I will be as the dew unto Israel :  
 He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.  
 His branches shall spread,  
 And his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.  
 They that dwell under his shadow shall return ;  
 They shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine :  
 The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon."

But alas! for the prophet's hopes. Though his faith in God was beautiful and true, his confidence in Israel was misplaced. The Ten Tribes, who were carried into Assyria, abandoned their religion, and became absorbed among the peoples around them. Like raindrops swallowed up in the ocean, they have disappeared from the field of history forever.

**Joel.**—The brief book of Joel gives no direct indication of the time when it was written. Accordingly a diversity of opinion has arisen, and we find the different dates assigned to the book sometimes disagreeing by nearly five hundred years. One thing is certain,—the date is either very early or quite late; and for the solution of the problem we are wholly dependent upon *internal* evidence.

Though the reasoning is not absolutely conclusive, it will be found interesting, as an example of historical criticism, to consider some of the arguments in favor of a late or post-exilic date. In the third chapter of Joel, second verse, Jehovah declares his purpose to judge the nations "for My people and for My heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations and parted My land." This seems to be a clear reference to the captivity in

586 B.C. The prophet appears to have had in mind the capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar when he wrote again, in the seventeenth verse, "there shall no strangers pass through her any more."

Furthermore, there is no reference in the book to the Ten Tribes, which seem to have disappeared entirely from the prophet's range of knowledge. He speaks only of Judah and Jerusalem; and when he uses the designation *Israel*, he gives it a restricted meaning. The Tyrians, Zidonians, and Philistines are charged with selling "the children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem unto the sons of the Grecians." These facts are most readily explained on the theory of a post-exilic date.

Again, there is an absence of the prophetic denunciation characteristic of the early prophets. Joel makes no reference to idolatry; the priests are held in honor; and the services of the temple are conducted regularly. No mention is made of king or princes; on the contrary, the *elders* are referred to as prominent in the public assembly. All these conditions are apparently suited only to the period after the restoration under Ezra and Nehemiah. We are reasonably justified, therefore, in fixing the date of Joel at approximately 410 B.C.

**Plague of Locusts.** — The occasion of Joel's prophecy was a plague of locusts. The visitation was exceedingly destructive. Vineyards and harvest fields were left desolate; and the ensuing destitution prevented the usual meat and drink offerings in the temple. Here is a part of the prophet's description of the work of devastation: —

"A nation is come up upon My land, strong and without number,  
Whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek teeth of  
a great lion.

He hath laid My vine waste, and barked My fig tree ;  
 He hath made it clean bare, and cast it away ;  
 The branches thereof are made white.  
 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her  
 youth.  
 The meat offering and the drink offering  
 Is cut off from the house of the Lord ;  
 The priests, the Lord's ministers, mourn.  
 The field is wasted, the land mourneth ;  
 For the corn is wasted ; the new wine is dried up,  
 The oil languisheth." <sup>1</sup>

**Day of the Lord.** — But the prophet does not stop at the sore visitation of locusts. The destruction about him suggests "the day of the Lord," when the land will be threatened with a still more terrible enemy. The descriptions in chapter 2 sometimes touch the sublime : —

"Let all the inhabitants of the earth tremble :  
 For the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand ;  
 A day of darkness and gloominess,  
 A day of clouds and thick darkness,  
 As a morning spread upon the mountains ; a great people and a strong ;  
 There hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it,  
 Even to the years of many generations."

**Deliverance.** — In view of the coming danger, the prophet exhorts the people to fasting and prayer. The exhortation contains a pleasing conception of the divine character : —

"Therefore also now, saith the Lord,  
 Turn ye even to Me with all your heart,  
 And with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning ;  
 And rend your heart, and not your garments,  
 And turn unto the Lord your God ; for He is gracious and merciful,  
 Slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth Him of the evil." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Joel 1 : 6-10.

<sup>2</sup> Joel 2 : 12, 13.

The people were obedient to the exhortation to repentance; and beginning with the eighteenth verse of the second chapter, we have a statement of the blessings that were to follow. "Then was the Lord jealous for His land and had pity on His people." The threatening invasion was to be driven away, and the land was to rejoice in returning abundance. This bounteous outward prosperity was to be attended also with spiritual blessings: —

"And it shall come to pass afterward,  
That I will pour out My Spirit upon all flesh;  
And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,  
Your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:  
And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids  
In those days will I pour out My Spirit.  
And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth,  
Blood, fire, and pillars of smoke.  
The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood,  
Before the great and terrible day of the Lord come.  
And it shall come to pass,  
That whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered."<sup>1</sup>

At length the Gentile nations were to be destroyed "in the valley of decision." "But Judah shall abide forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation."

**Characteristics.** — As will have been observed, the style of Joel is elevated and sustained. His prophecy is in poetry, in which the parallelisms are well observed. His descriptions are exceedingly graphic; and his imagination has a large movement. More than one passage reaches the level of sublimity.

It can hardly be said that Joel has the breadth of view belonging to Isaiah. With him the contrast between Judah and the Gentile nations is sharply drawn. Judah is

<sup>1</sup> This notable passage is quoted in full in Acts 2: 17-21.

to be saved; the other nations are to be destroyed. This narrow view, which mistook the world mission of the Chosen People, was a weakness of post-exilic Judaism. We meet with it in the gospels, and it was a disturbing factor in the early church.

**Amos.** — Though placed after the major prophets and third among the minor prophets, Amos is the earliest of them all. As we learn from the opening statement of the book, he prophesied "in the days of Jeroboam, the son of Joash, King of Israel." He preceded Hosea, who also began his prophecies under Jeroboam, by several years. The date of his prophetic labors may be safely placed in the neighborhood of 750 B.C.

As the earliest prophetic book of the Old Testament, Amos possesses a peculiar interest. Though called from the humble occupation of a shepherd, he became a model for a long line of inspired teachers, in whose writings we find the same ardent condemnation of wickedness, the same denunciations of divine judgment, and the same promises of ultimate redemption.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the book of Amos has great historic value. By means of its graphic and definite touches of description, we are able to reproduce a tolerably complete picture of the social and moral conditions of the kingdom of Israel in the eighth century before Christ.

**The Prophet's Call.** — In 2 Kings (14: 23-29) we have a brief account of the reign of Jeroboam II., under whom the northern kingdom reached a high degree of political power. His armies recovered the territory that had been lost under previous rulers. But "he did that which was

<sup>1</sup> "Amos is one of the most marvellous and incomprehensible figures in the history of the human mind, the pioneer of a process of evolution from which a new epoch of humanity dates." — CORNILL, "The Prophets of Israel," p. 11.



evil in the sight of the Lord ;” and accordingly we see idolatry flourishing at Bethel, and pride, luxury, injustice, and oppression prevailing among the people.

It was these fatal conditions that led to the call of Amos, as he tended his flocks and dressed sycamore trees at Tekoa, a village of Judah some twelve miles south of Jerusalem. Though he was no prophet, as he tells us,<sup>1</sup> nor the son of a prophet, the divine call came to the gifted peasant, as he was faithfully pursuing his humble duties. In his own words, “The Lord took me from following the flock ; and the Lord said unto me, Go, prophesy unto My people Israel.” This unexpected and extraordinary task the prophet performed, as we shall see, with rare skill and fidelity.

**Admirable Tact.** — It is no light calling to rebuke a nation for sin in the name of the Lord. When Amos appeared at Bethel, the centre of idolatrous worship in the northern kingdom, he was hardly a welcome guest. He did not at once reveal the burden of his message ; but with admirable tact portrayed the judgments that were to fall upon the surrounding nations, — Syria, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, and others. Even Judah did not escape.

It was not till the favor of the people had thus been conciliated that the prophet ventured to announce his message to Israel. His words have a manly directness and force ; Israel will no more escape the consequences of iniquity than the neighboring nations : —

“Thus saith the Lord : for three transgressions of Israel, and for four,  
I will not turn away the punishment thereof ;  
Because they sold the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of  
shoes ;  
That pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor,

<sup>1</sup> Amos 7 : 14.

And turn aside the way of the meek ;  
 And they lay themselves down upon clothes laid to pledge  
 By every altar, and they drink the wine of the condemned  
 In the house of their god."<sup>1</sup>

These sins of bribery, oppression, and drunken idolatry were aggravated by ingratitude ; for the people of Israel had forgotten the destruction of the mighty Amorites and their own marvellous deliverance from Egypt. Hence the prophet announces, though somewhat darkly, the approach of divine judgment : —

“ Behold, I will press you in your place,  
 As a cart presseth that is full of sheaves.  
 And flight shall perish from the swift,  
 And the strong shall not strengthen his force,  
 Neither shall the mighty deliver himself :  
 Neither shall he stand that handleth the bow ;  
 And he that is swift of foot shall not deliver himself ;  
 Neither shall he that rideth a horse deliver himself ;  
 And he that is courageous among the mighty  
 Shall flee away naked in that day, saith the Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

**Morality and Ritual.** — In the second part of the book of Amos (chapters 3–6), we have a series of three discourses, in which the prophet’s message is repeated in varied and impressive form. Each discourse begins with the emphatic address, “ Hear ye this word.” In his strong ethical sense we recognize the genuine prophetic spirit of Amos. In place of the injustice, oppression, and iniquity of Israel, he vigorously urges righteousness : —

“ Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live ;  
 And so the Lord, the God of hosts, shall be with you, as ye say.  
 Hate the evil, and love the good,  
 And establish judgment in the gate :  
 It may be that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious  
 Unto the remnant of Joseph.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Amos 2 : 6–8.

<sup>2</sup> Amos 2 : 13–16.

<sup>3</sup> Amos 5 : 14, 15.

When the prophet found that the people of Israel were disposed to defend their piety by pointing to the splendor and regularity of their assemblies and sacrifices, he breaks forth with indignation in the name of Jehovah : —

“ I hate, I despise your feast days,  
And I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies.  
Yea, though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings  
I will not accept them ;  
Neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts.  
Take thou away from Me the noise of thy songs ;  
For I will not hear the melody of thy viols.  
But let judgment roll down as waters,  
And righteousness as a mighty stream.”<sup>1</sup>

**A Picture of Luxury.** — In the pride of their wealth and power, the people of the northern kingdom felt a sense of security. They fancied that “ the evil day ” was far off ; and in their self-complacent confidence, they gave themselves up to all the intoxication of Oriental luxury. In denouncing their voluptuous self-indulgence, the prophet gives us an illuminating picture of the social customs of his day : —

“ Woe to them that are at ease in Zion,  
And trust in the mountain of Samaria.

\* \* \* \* \*

“ Ye that put far away the evil day,  
And cause the seat of violence to come near ;  
That lie upon beds of ivory,  
And stretch themselves upon their couches,  
And eat the lambs out of the flock,  
And the calves out of the midst of the stall ;  
That chant to the sound of the viol,  
And invent to themselves instruments of music, like David ;  
That drink wine in bowls  
And anoint themselves with the chief ointments ;  
But they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Amos 5 : 21-24.

<sup>2</sup> Amos 6 : 1, 3-6.

The consequences of this life of idleness, oppression, and luxury were not difficult to foresee. No nation can long survive under those conditions. Amos discerned the ambition and might of Assyria; and without naming the conqueror, he plainly declares to Israel, "I will cause you to go into captivity beyond Damascus, saith the Lord, whose name is the God of hosts."<sup>1</sup>

**Part Third.**—The last three chapters of Amos, which constitute a distinct section, consist of a series of visions, with a historical interlude, and an epilogue of hope. In the eighth and ninth chapters, the denunciation of woes becomes more definite and more terrible:—

"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord God,  
That I will cause the sun to go down at noon,  
And I will darken the earth in the clear day:  
And I will turn your feasts into mourning,  
And all your songs into lamentation;  
And I will bring up sackcloth upon all loins,  
And baldness upon every head;  
And I will make it as the mourning for an only son  
And the end thereof as a bitter day."<sup>2</sup>

But "the house of Jacob" is not to be utterly destroyed. With an immovable confidence in the goodness and favor of God, the prophet foresees, beyond the days of evil, an age of renewed prosperity and blessing. The Assyrian captivity, as he believed, would not be perpetual; and hence, speaking in the name of Jehovah, he declares:—

"I will bring again the captivity of My people Israel,  
And they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them;  
And they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof;  
They shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them,  
And I will plant them upon their land,  
And they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have  
given them,  
Saith the Lord thy God."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Amos 5: 27; 6: 7.

<sup>2</sup> Amos 8: 9, 10.

<sup>3</sup> Amos 9: 14, 15.

**Literary Style.** — In view of the rural antecedents of Amos, it has been customary to ascribe to his writings a degree of homely rusticity. As we read over his prophecies, we discover reminiscences of his earlier life. He speaks of threshing instruments, of harvest carts loaded with sheaves, of shepherds fighting with wild beasts, of the labors of the ploughman, and of other rural pursuits and objects as he had observed them on the hills and in the vales of Tekoa.

But, as will have been observed from the extracts given, the style of Amos shows no rustic uncouthness. His discourses are skilfully put together; his thought moves on a high plane; and his sentences exhibit a satisfying artistic finish. Though he falls below Isaiah in grandeur of thought and intensity of expression, he shows himself a vigorous thinker and writer. It is evident that his earlier years were not wholly taken up with tending sheep; there must have been days and nights given to studying the literature of his people and to pondering the deep things of God.

**Obadiah.** — The prophecy of Obadiah consists of a single chapter, and has the distinction of being the shortest book in the Old Testament. Its date has been a matter of dispute among biblical scholars; but the statements of the tenth verse, which speaks of the capture of Jerusalem as a past fact, seem to refer to the destruction of the city by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C. The prophet may, therefore, be regarded as post-exilic.

Nothing whatever is known of the prophet; the introduction merely announces "the vision of Obadiah." He voices the age-long hostility of his people against Edom, whose doom or judgment he declares in brief but striking terms:—

"Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle,  
And though thou set thy nest among the stars,  
Thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord."

**The Occasion.** — The occasion that evoked the prophecy is clearly stated. Edom had taken part with the Chaldeans in the invasion of Judah, and had rejoiced at the downfall of Jerusalem. This alien alliance of the children of Esau seemed to the prophet to call for condemnation and judgment : —

“For thy violence against thy brother Jacob  
 Shame shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off forever.  
 In the day that thou stoodest on the other side,  
 In the day that the strangers carried away his forces,  
 And foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem,  
 Even thou wast as one of them.  
 But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother  
 In the day that he became a stranger ;  
 Neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah  
 In the day of their destruction ;  
 Neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress.”

**Future of Zion.** — The prophet concludes his brief discourse in a triumphant tone. Though Edom and “all the heathen” be destroyed, the glory of Israel shall be revived : —

“Upon mount Zion shall be deliverance,  
 And there shall be holiness ;  
 And the house of Jacob shall possess their possessions.  
 And the house of Jacob shall be a fire,  
 And the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble.”

The numerous parallels between Obadiah and the doom prophecy against Edom in the forty-ninth chapter of Jeremiah make it perfectly evident that one borrowed from the other, unless both drew upon an earlier document. The question has given rise to much critical discussion, which, however, does not affect the truth of the message of either prophet.



## RESEARCH WORK

## HOSEA

- The unfaithfulness of Israel in symbol, Hos. 1-3.  
A reproof of people and priests, Hos. 4.  
An announcement of divine judgments, Hos. 5.  
An exhortation to repentance, Hos. 6.  
A reproof of Israel, Hos. 7.  
Assyrian invasion foretold, Hos. 8.  
Sin and judgment, Hos. 10.  
Ingratitude and punishment, Hos. 11.  
Reproof of Ephraim and Judah, Hos. 12, 13.  
Promises of blessing, Hos. 14.

## JOEL

- A plague of locusts, Joel 1.  
The coming day of the Lord, Joel 2 : 1-17.  
Repentance and blessing, Joel 2 : 18-32.  
The heathen destroyed, Judah saved, Joel 3.

## AMOS

- Judgments against various nations, Amos 1.  
The punishment of Israel, Amos 2 : 6-16.  
Oppression and ruin, Amos 3, 4.  
An elegy over Israel, Amos 5.  
Luxury punished with captivity, Amos 6.  
Visions and their explanations, Amos 7-9.

## OBADIAH

- The doom of Edom, Obad. 1.

## CHAPTER XIII

### STUDIES IN JONAH, MICAH, NAHUM, AND HABAKKUK

**Book of Jonah.** — The book of Jonah, though often made a stumbling-block, is one of the most remarkable productions in the Old Testament. As an artistic composition, it is worthy of high praise; but its literary excellence falls into insignificance in comparison with its spiritual message. Unlike the other prophetic books, it is wholly narrative in form; but the framers of the Old Testament canon made no mistake in placing Jonah, not among the historical writings, but among the prophets.

The hero of the book is "Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, of Gath-hepher."<sup>1</sup> He lived in the early days of Jeroboam II., and predicted the military successes of that sovereign. He lived at a time when Nineveh was the capital of the world empire of Assyria. But it is safe to say that Jonah was not the author of the book that bears his name. The language of the narrative belongs to a later period; and, as we shall presently see, its message is adapted to post-exilic times. It was probably written some time in the fourth century before Christ.

**The Story.** — The story of Jonah is well known. The prophet was divinely commissioned to rebuke the great city of Nineveh for its wickedness. The task was an unwelcome one; and to escape its responsibilities, the narrow-minded prophet embarked at Joppa for the distant West. But he was not permitted to escape the divine call; and

<sup>1</sup> 2 Kings 14: 25.

when a severe storm arose, of which he acknowledged himself the cause, he was hurled into the sea. He was swallowed by a great fish, which after "three days and three nights" cast him upon dry land.

Humbled by this extraordinary experience, Jonah now proceeded, in obedience to a second divine call, to fulfil his prophetic mission. He entered the mighty capital of Assyria, and began to proclaim aloud in its streets, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." The city was deeply moved, and promptly repented in sackcloth and ashes. "And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, which He said He would do unto them; and He did it not."

This act of mercy toward a heathen city displeased the surly prophet. In his anger he made himself a shelter east of the city, and took up his abode there to await results. A gourd sprang up in a night to afford him a grateful protection from the heat. He rejoiced in its shade; but it withered as quickly as it came. The prophet was vexed beyond measure, and thus gave an opportunity to present the great lesson of the book. "And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry even unto death. And the Lord said, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not labored, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night; and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city; wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

**Lesson of Tolerance.**—The book of Jonah is full of moral lessons, which devout scholars have often pointed out. It teaches, for example, that it is vain for a prophet

to try to escape from a duty which has been divinely laid upon him. It illustrates, as Jeremiah had pointed out, that all prophecy is conditional. It shows that the way of salvation is through repentance and reformation.

But all these spiritual truths are to be viewed merely as incidental. The great purpose of the book is revealed in the closing verses, as quoted above. That purpose is to show, in opposition to Jewish narrowness and intolerance after the exile, that God's mercy and love include all nations. The book has the breadth of the New Testament, and plainly teaches that all men, regardless of nationality, may be saved through repentance and faith. It is the clear perception of this truth, in the midst of Jewish hostility and exclusiveness, that makes the greatness of the book of Jonah.<sup>1</sup>

**A Type of Israel.** — As already intimated, the book of Jonah is to be regarded, like the story of the Prodigal Son or the Good Samaritan, as a parable rather than as history. It probably embodies traditional historic elements; but these have been freely fashioned by the inspired writer to convey a great message to his people. The story of the great fish, the sudden conversion of an imperial capital, and the marvellous growth of the gourd are all happily imagined incidents to carry forward the narrative to its magnificent conclusion.

Jonah is a type of the narrow-minded Jews of the author's day. He is unwilling to preach to heathen at all; and when they turn to Jehovah in repentance, a result at

<sup>1</sup> "The real design of the narrative is to teach, in opposition to the narrow, exclusive view, which was too apt to be popular with the Jews, that God's purposes of grace are not limited to Israel alone, but that they are open to the heathen as well, if only they abandon their sinful courses, and turn to Him in true penitence. . . . Jonah appears as the representative of the popular Israelitish creed." — DRIVER, "Literature of the Old Testament," p. 323.

which he should have heartily rejoiced, he is profoundly grieved. This narrow and selfish spirit is portrayed as in direct opposition to the all-embracing compassion and love of God. Viewed in this light, the book of Jonah is seen to possess the character of a satire upon post-exilic Judaism.

**An Allegory.** — The book of Jonah has sometimes been regarded as an allegory, in which is portrayed the history of Israel. According to this view, Jonah symbolizes the Hebrew nation. Like the prophet, the people of Israel were intrusted with a divine mission to the world. They proved unfaithful to the divine call, and were consequently “swallowed up,” like the prophet in the great fish, by the mighty empire of Babylonia.

In exile the Hebrew people turned unto the Lord, and were restored, like the prophet, to their native land. But they were not healed of their narrow and unsympathetic spirit; and, like Jonah, they were grieved that the divine judgments, foretold by the prophets, were not at once executed upon the gentile nations. This allegorical interpretation has the merit of ingenuity; but it is difficult to believe that the gifted author, in shaping his artistic narrative, ever had it in mind.

**Jonah in the Gospels.** — There is an interesting reference to the narrative of Jonah in Matthew and Luke. The Pharisees on one occasion requested a sign from Jesus. He refused the miracle they desired; and accordingly He replied: “This generation is an evil generation: it seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it but the sign of Jonah. For even as Jonah became a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. The men of Nineveh shall stand up in the judgment with this generation; and shall condemn it; for they repented

at the preaching of Jonah: and behold, a greater than Jonah is here." <sup>1</sup>

This incident shows our Saviour's familiarity with the book of Jonah. He shared its broad views of God's love; and in His own ministry of mercy He not only included Gentiles, but also looked upon Himself as the Saviour of the world. His final charge to His disciples was to go "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." <sup>2</sup>

**Micah.** — As we learn from the introduction to the book of Micah, the prophet lived in "the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, Kings of Judah." He was a younger contemporary of Isaiah; and if he prophesied in the days of Jotham and Ahaz, about which there is some doubt, he was likewise a contemporary of Hosea. There is a notice of his work in Jeremiah (26: 18), which tells us that "Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, King of Judah." As indicated in the sixth verse of the first chapter, the destruction of Samaria belongs to the future; hence the date of the earlier prophecies at least must be fixed before the year 722 B.C.

Like Amos, the prophet Micah was of rural origin. He came from the village of Moresheth, which was situated in the maritime plain not far from Gath. He was a man of penetrating judgment and strong moral sense; and he pointed out, with masculine vigor, the various iniquities of Judah and Israel. Though there are critical difficulties in

<sup>1</sup> Luke 11: 29, 30, 32. In the parallel passage in Matthew there is this additional statement: "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale: so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." This statement seems to be an interpolation — the effort of some copyist or scribe to throw light on the Master's meaning. This view is confirmed by the incorrectness of the statement; for Jesus was not in the tomb for *three nights*. He was crucified on Friday and rose on Sunday.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 16: 15.



parts of the book, the prophet's message is, in the main, clear and strong.

**Reproof and Judgment.** — The first three chapters, which make a distinct section of the book, are chiefly concerned with reproof and judgment. In Micah's denunciation of the sins of Samaria and Jerusalem, we recognize the genuine spirit of the Hebrew prophet. His prophecy opens with a fine description of the coming of Jehovah in judgment: —

“Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is:  
And let the Lord God be witness against you,  
The Lord from His holy temple.  
For behold the Lord cometh forth out of His place,  
And will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth.  
And the mountains shall be molten under Him,  
And the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire,  
And as the waters that are poured down a steep place.”

In the first three chapters the reproofs of iniquity and the menace of judgment are repeated, always in stronger and more definite terms.<sup>1</sup> In the third chapter the ruling classes are particularly denounced for their injustice, oppression of the poor, love of evil, and greed of gain: —

“Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob,  
And princes of the house of Israel,  
That abhor judgment, and pervert all equity.  
They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity.  
The heads thereof judge for reward,  
And the priests thereof teach for hire,

<sup>1</sup> “A moral indignation, truly awe-inspiring, overpowers him at all he sees and experiences. Especially the sins of the nobility of Jerusalem, those unscrupulous bloodsuckers and despoilers of the people, who stopped at naught if they but had the power, are so atrocious that they can only be atoned for by the destruction of Jerusalem. — CORNILL, “The Prophets of Israel,” p. 69.

And the prophets thereof divine for money:  
 Yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say,  
 Is not the Lord among us? none evil can come to us." <sup>1</sup>

The result of this moral degeneracy, as the prophets always and truly felt, could be only destruction. Hence Micah, speaking in the name of Jehovah, declares:—

"I will make Samaria as an heap of the field,  
 And as plantings of a vineyard:  
 And I will pour down the stones thereof into the valley,  
 And I will discover the foundations thereof.  
 Therefore shall Zion be ploughed as a field,  
 And Jerusalem shall become heaps,  
 And the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest." <sup>2</sup>

**A Vision of Glory.**—In chapters 4 and 5, which make the second division of the book of Micah, we have a picture of the future glory of Zion. Jerusalem is to become the centre of true religion; and as its beneficent principles take possession of the nations, the implements of war will be transformed to serve the arts of peace:—

"But in the last days it shall come to pass,  
 That the mountain of the house of the Lord  
 Shall be established in the top of the mountains,  
 And it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it.  
 And many nations shall come, and say,  
 Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
 And to the house of the God of Jacob;  
 And He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths:  
 For the law shall go forth of Zion,  
 And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.  
 And He shall judge among many people,  
 And rebuke strong nations afar off;  
 And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,  
 And their spears into pruning-hooks:  
 Nation shall not lift up a sword against nation,  
 Neither shall they learn war any more." <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mic. 3: 9-11.

<sup>2</sup> Mic. 1: 6; 3: 12.

<sup>3</sup> Mic. 4: 1-3.

The town from which the future ruler of Israel was to come is definitely indicated : it is not the proud metropolis, but the humble village of Bethlehem. As we have already seen, this statement of the prophet was understood by the Jews, at the beginning of our era, to refer to the Messiah or King of Israel : —

“But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah,  
Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah,  
Yet out of thee shall he come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel ;  
Whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.”<sup>1</sup>

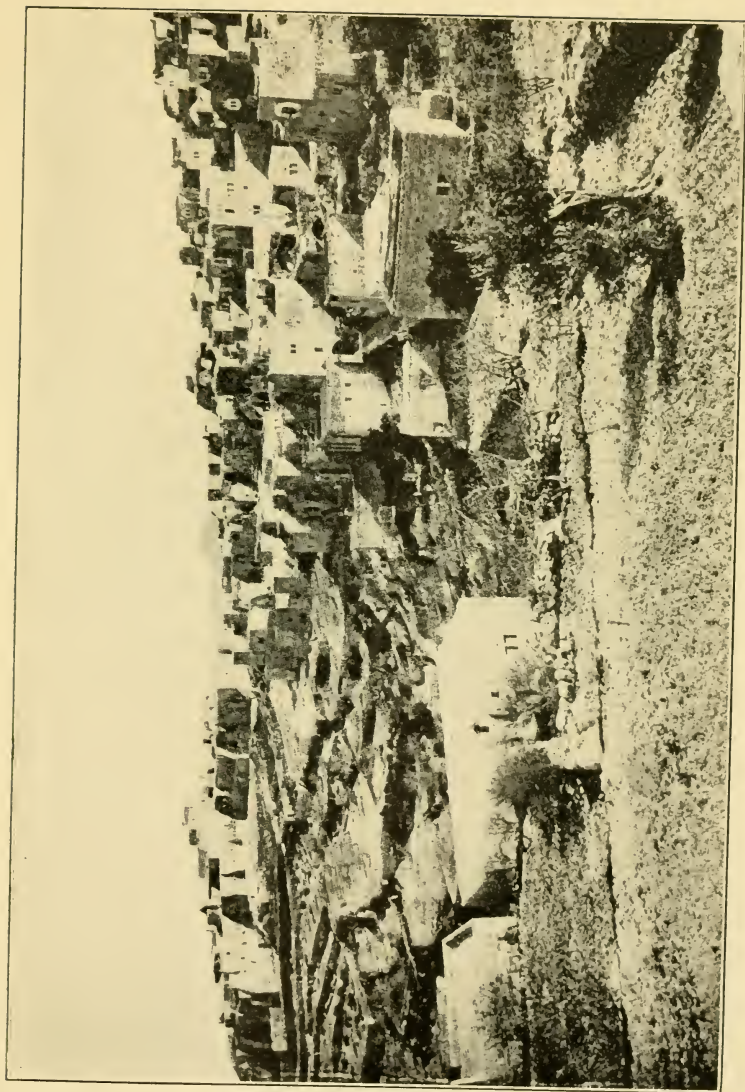
**Dramatic Prophecy.** — The last two chapters of Micah, which form the third division of the book, have a distinctive character. They are in the form of a dramatic dialogue, in which the speakers are Jehovah and Israel. The setting of the drama is magnificent, for the controversy takes place in the presence of the mountains. Jehovah speaks first, and recounts the mercies of the past : —

“O My people, what have I done unto thee?  
And wherein have I wearied thee? testify against Me.  
For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,  
And redeemed thee out of the house of servants ;  
And I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.  
O My people, remember now what Balak, King of Moab, consulted,  
And what Balaam the son of Beor answered him.”

In reply to this appeal of Jehovah, the people virtually admit their ingratitude and sin, and ask what they shall do to make atonement : —

“Wherewith shall I come before the Lord,  
And bow myself before the high God?  
Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?  
Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams,  
Or with ten thousands of rivers of oil?  
Shall I give my first-born for my transgression,  
The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? ”

<sup>1</sup> Mic. 5 : 2. See Matt. 2 : 3-6.



BETHLEHEM



At this point the mountains, who are imagined to be sitting in judgment, make known their decision, which is the message of the prophet:—

“He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;  
And what doth the Lord require of thee,  
But to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God?”

Beginning with the ninth verse of the sixth chapter, and extending to the sixth verse of the seventh chapter, we have another dramatic prophecy, in which Jehovah and the prophet are the speakers. The picture of the social condition of the Hebrews presented in this dialogue could not well be in darker colors. At the close of the book we have one of the noblest portrayals of the divine character to be found in the Old Testament:—

“Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity,  
And passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?  
He retaineth not His anger forever, because He delighteth in mercy.  
He will turn again, He will have compassion upon us;  
He will subdue our iniquities;  
And Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea.  
Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob, and the mercy to Abraham,  
Which Thou hast sworn unto our fathers from the days of old.”

**Nahum.**—The book of Nahum is a doom prophecy directed against the city of Nineveh. Nothing further is known of the author than his title, “the Elkoshite.” This designation is derived from the village of Elkosh in Galilee, which was probably the prophet’s native place. If this supposition is correct, Nahum is the last prophet of northern Israel.

There is no direct statement of the time when the prophecy was written; but the date may be approximately determined by two events to which the prophecy refers.



In the third chapter there is a description of the destruction of No, or Thebes, in Egypt. Addressing the confident city of Nineveh, whose destruction he has threatened, the poet asks : —

“Art thou better than populous No,  
That was situate among the rivers,  
That had waters round about it,  
Whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?  
Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite;  
Put and Lubim were thy helpers.  
Yet was she carried away; she went into captivity;  
Her young children also were dashed in pieces  
At the top of all the streets;  
And they cast lots for her honorable men,  
And all her great men were bound in chains.”

The capture of Thebes, as thus described, took place during the invasion of Egypt by Assurbanipal about 660 B.C. The destruction of Nineveh, which is the subject of Nahum's prophecy, took place in 606 B.C. Hence it is evident that the prophet wrote between these two dates.

**Purpose.** — The prophet probably had a twofold purpose in declaring the approaching doom of Nineveh. In the first place, he meant to comfort his people by the assurance that the destroyer of Israel was himself to be destroyed. In the second place, he wished to declare the great truth that iniquity, even in the mightiest nation, inevitably leads to divine judgment. He denounces Nineveh as a “bloody city, full of lies and robbery.”<sup>1</sup> For this reason, speaking in the name of Jehovah, the prophet declares : —

“Behold I am against thee, saith the Lord of hosts;  
And I will discover thy skirts upon thy face,  
And I will show the nations thy nakedness,  
And the kingdoms thy shame.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nahum 3 : 1.

<sup>2</sup> Nahum 3 : 5.

In Nahum we miss the fine spiritual quality belonging to Hosea, Amos, and Isaiah ; yet, as Farrar remarks, the prophet “forcibly brings before us God’s moral government of the world, and the duty of trust in Him as the avenger of wrong-doers, the sole source of security and peace to those who love Him.”

**Poetic Quality.** — The poetic quality of Nahum’s prophecy is unusually fine. Though sudden transitions of thought, as in the first chapter, sometimes make his meaning obscure, his descriptions are vivid and admirable. The prophecy opens with a noble passage descriptive of the Lord’s coming in judgment : —

“God is jealous, and the Lord revengeth ;  
 The Lord revengeth, and is furious ;  
 The Lord will take vengeance on His adversaries,  
 And He reserveth wrath for His enemies.  
 The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power,  
 And will not at all acquit the wicked :  
 The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm,  
 And the clouds are the dust of His feet.  
 He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers :  
 Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.  
 The mountains quake at Him, and the hills melt,  
 And the earth is burned at his presence,  
 Yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.”

The second chapter contains a description of the capture of Nineveh by the allied Medes and Babylonians under Cyaxares : —

“The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet :  
 The chariots flash with steel in the day of his preparation.”

The same subject is further elaborated in the third chapter. As the enemy enter the fated city, we hear, —

“The noise of the whip, and the noise of the rattling of wheels;  
And prancing horses, and jumping chariots;  
The horsemen mounting, and the flashing sword, and the glittering  
spear;  
And a multitude of slain, and a great heap of carcasses;  
And there is none end of the corpses;  
They stumble upon their corpses.”

We may close this brief study of the prophet with the appreciative words of McFadyen: “Poetically the little book of Nahum is one of the finest in the Old Testament. Its descriptions are vivid and impetuous: they set us before the walls of the beleaguered Nineveh, and show us the war chariots of her enemies darting to and fro like lightning, the prancing steeds, the flashing swords, the glittering spears. The poetry glows with passionate joy as it contemplates the ruin of cruel and victorious Assyria.”<sup>1</sup>

**Habakkuk.** — Nothing is known of the personal history of Habakkuk. The contents of his prophecy show that he lived at the time when the Chaldean power was looming into prominence. Jerusalem had not yet been destroyed, but its approaching doom was discernible. We are safe, therefore, in fixing the date of Habakkuk’s prophecy in the neighborhood of 610 B.C.

The prophecy of Habakkuk is in the form of a dramatic dialogue. The prophet complains of the corrupt state of society in Judah (1: 2-4). He is answered by Jehovah, who announces, as a divine judgment, the coming invasion of the Chaldeans (1: 5-11). The prophet is not satisfied with this answer, for he cannot understand how it is possible for Jehovah to use a proud, idolatrous nation to punish His people (1: 12-17). Once more Jehovah speaks and assures the prophet that the Chaldeans, on

<sup>1</sup> McFadyen, “Introduction to the Old Testament,” p. 206.

account of their iniquity, will in their turn be destroyed. The prophecy concludes with a magnificent ode, which is called "a prayer of Habakkuk."

**The Prophet Perplexed.** — After this brief analysis, it will be found interesting to examine the several parts of the prophecy more closely. The prophet beholds the wickedness prevalent in Judah, and is perplexed, as many have been since his day, to see iniquity prosper and righteousness trampled under foot. In the opening of the dialogue, the prophet makes known his perplexity to Jehovah : —

"O Lord, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear !  
 Even cry out unto Thee of violence, and Thou wilt not save !  
 Why dost Thou show me iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance ?  
 For spoiling and violence are before me :  
 And there are that raise up strife and contention.  
 Therefore the law is slacked, and judgment doth never go forth :  
 For the wicked doth compass about the righteous ;  
 Therefore wrong judgment proceedeth." <sup>1</sup>

In reply to the prophet's complaint of unpunished wickedness, Jehovah declares that judgment is coming : —

"For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation,  
 Which shall march through the breadth of the land,  
 To possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs.  
 They are terrible and dreadful :  
 Their judgment and their dignity proceed from themselves.  
 Their horses also are swifter than the leopards,  
 And are more fierce than the evening wolves :  
 And their horsemen shall spread themselves,  
 And their horsemen shall come from far ;  
 They shall fly as the eagle that hasteth to eat." <sup>2</sup>

**A Second Inquiry.** — The prophet, who recognizes the holiness and eternal power of God, is troubled by another doubt, which he lays before Jehovah. How can the proud,

<sup>1</sup> Hab. i : 2-4.

<sup>2</sup> Hab. i : 6-8.

idolatrous Chaldeans be permitted to punish Judah, a nation standing far higher in righteousness ?

“Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil,  
And canst not look on iniquity :  
Wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously,  
And holdest Thy tongue when the wicked devoureth  
The man that is more righteous than he ? ” <sup>1</sup>

Then the prophet, in imagination, takes his stand upon a watch-tower to await the answer of Jehovah. It is not long delayed ; and the prophet learns that Babylon, too, shall perish for its wickedness : —

“Woe to him that getteth an evil gain for his house,  
That he may set his nest on high,  
That he may be delivered from the hand of evil !  
Thou hast consulted shame to thy house by cutting off many peoples,  
And hast sinned against thy soul.  
For the stone shall cry out of the wall,  
And the beam out of the timber shall answer it.” <sup>2</sup>

**A Notable Ode.** — The closing ode is commonly regarded as one of the noblest poems in the Old Testament. After praying that the Lord's work may be revived in Judah, the prophet describes Jehovah's coming to punish the nations and redeem His people : —

“His glory covered the heavens,  
And the earth was full of His praise.  
And His brightness was as the light ;  
He had rays coming forth from His hand :  
And there was the hiding of His power.  
Before Him went the pestilence,  
And fiery bolts went forth at His feet.  
He stood and measured the earth ;  
He beheld, and drove asunder the nations :  
And the eternal mountains were scattered,  
The everlasting hills did bow.” <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hab. 1 : 13.

<sup>2</sup> Hab. 2 : 19-21.

<sup>3</sup> Hab. 3 : 3-6.

Though the sublime manifestations of Jehovah's power filled the prophet with trembling fear, he retained his exultant faith : —

“Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,  
I will joy in the God of my salvation.  
Jehovah, the Lord, is my strength,  
And He maketh my feet like hinds' feet,  
And will make me to walk upon mine high places.”<sup>1</sup>

It is well for us when, like the prophet, we can come forth from our religious perplexities with this triumphant faith.

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#### RESEARCH WORK

##### JONAH

The prophet's flight and punishment, Jon. 1.  
Jonah's prayer of faith, Jon. 2.  
The repentance of Nineveh, Jon. 3.  
A lesson of divine compassion, Jon. 4.

##### MICAH

Reproof and judgment, Mic. 1-3.  
Future glory of Zion, Mic. 4.  
Dramatic prophecy, Mic. 6, 7.

##### NAHUM

The burden of Nineveh, Nah. 1-3.

##### HABAKKUK

A prophet's perplexities, Hab. 1, 2.  
A prayer of Habakkuk, Hab. 3.

<sup>1</sup> Hab. 3 : 18, 19.



## CHAPTER XIV

### STUDIES IN ZEPHANIAH, HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH, AND MALACHI

**Zephaniah.** — All that is known of the prophet Zephaniah is given in the introduction to his prophecy. There his descent is recorded for four generations. In his genealogical line he mentions Hezekiah, who is supposed by some scholars to be the king of that name; in that case, Zephaniah was a prince as well as prophet. He prophesies "in the days of Josiah, King of Judah"; and the moral conditions he describes, evidently existed before the reformation effected in the eighteenth year of that sovereign<sup>1</sup> (621 B.C.). The date of Zephaniah's prophecy may therefore be approximately fixed at 630 B.C.

This brief book of prophecy may be divided into three parts: (1) the menace of judgment (chapter 1); (2) the admonition to reformation (chapters 2-3:7); and (3) the promise of future glory (chapter 3:8-20). In this arrangement we recognize the characteristic spirit of Hebrew prophecy. Contemporary with Jeremiah, Zephaniah points out substantially the same corrupt condition of individual and social life. He charges Judah with idolatry, injustice, oppression, hardened impiety, and pagan customs,<sup>2</sup> which

<sup>1</sup> See 2 Kings 23.

<sup>2</sup> "The prophets, being public teachers, occupy themselves with the life of the people. And the standard which they apply is just, as a rule, the covenant relation, *i.e.* the Decalogue. Hence Israel's sin is usually of two kinds: either *forsaking* of Jehovah, God of Israel, or social *wrong-doing* of the members of the covenant people to one another. But what gives its meaning to all they say is their vivid religious conception of Jehovah as a person in immediate relation to the people." — DAVIDSON, "Theology of the Old Testament," p. 213.

he foresees will end in judgment and disaster. As a whole the prophecy of Zephaniah presents a picture of judgment and desolation, which is lighted up only by the triumphant pæan at its close. "No hotter book," says George Adam Smith, "lies in all the Old Testament. Neither dew nor grass nor tree nor any blossom lives in it, but it is everywhere fire, smoke, darkness, drifting chaff, ruins, nettles, saltpits, and owls and ravens looking down from the windows of desolate palaces."<sup>1</sup>

**A Picture of Judgment.** — The prophecy opens abruptly with dire threatenings. The day of the Lord, which is presented as an occasion of inexorable judgment, is pronounced near at hand. The scenes of desolation, which the prophet describes, seem to be drawn from the widespread destruction wrought by the Scythians, who about this time, as Herodotus tells us, "became masters of all Asia."<sup>2</sup> Here is a part of the prophet's gloomy picture : —

"The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly,  
 Even the voice of the day of the Lord :  
 The mighty man shall cry there bitterly.  
 That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress,  
 A day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess,  
 A day of clouds and thick darkness,  
 A day of the trumpet and alarm  
 Against the fenced cities, and against the high towers.  
 And I will bring distress upon men, that they shall walk like blind men,  
 Because they have sinned against the Lord."<sup>3</sup>

**Admonition to Repentance.** — The whole of chapter 2 and the opening of chapter 3 contain an earnest admonition to repentance and reformation. The conditional character of prophecy is recognized ; and it is yet possi-

<sup>1</sup> George Adam Smith, "Book of the Twelve Prophets," Vol. II., p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Herodotus, Bk. I., ch. 104.

<sup>3</sup> Zeph. 1: 14-17.

ble, the prophet declares, to escape the threatened destruction by a humble and righteous spirit : —

“ Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth,  
Which have wrought His judgment ; seek righteousness, seek meekness :

It may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord’s anger.” <sup>1</sup>

The destruction of the Philistines, of Moab, Ammon, Ethiopia, and even Nineveh, is in succession foretold. Their destruction is represented as a vain warning to Judah: —

“ I have cut off the nations : their towns are desolate ;  
I made their streets waste, that none passeth by :  
Their cities are destroyed, so that there is no man,  
That there is none inhabitant.  
I said, Surely thou wilt fear Me, thou wilt receive instruction ;  
So their dwelling should not be cut off, however I punished them :  
But they rose early and corrupted all their doings.” <sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of the third chapter we find an enumeration of the iniquities of which Jerusalem was guilty, and from which the city was admonished to turn : —

“ She trusted not in the Lord ; she drew not near to her God.  
Her princes within her are roaring lions ;  
Her judges are evening wolves ;  
They leave nothing till the morrow.  
Her prophets are light and treacherous persons :  
Her priests have polluted the sanctuary,  
They have done violence to the law.” <sup>3</sup>

**Future Glory.** — But the prophet does not let his address end in the desolations of divine judgment. A pious remnant of Judah, who “ shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies,” is to be saved. “ They shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.” Therefore, —

<sup>1</sup> Zeph. 2 : 3.

<sup>2</sup> Zeph. 3 : 6, 7.

<sup>3</sup> Zeph. 3 : 2-4.

"Sing, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O Israel ;  
 Be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem.  
 The Lord hath taken away thy judgments,  
 He hath cast out thine enemy :  
 The King of Israel, even the Lord, is in the midst of thee :  
 Thou shalt not see evil any more.  
 In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Fear thou not ;  
 And to Zion, Let not thine hands be slack.  
 The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty, He will save,  
 He will rejoice over thee with joy ;  
 He will rest in His love ; He will joy over thee with singing."<sup>1</sup>

**Post-exilic Prophecy.** — The three remaining prophets — Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi — all belong to the post-exilic period. The destruction of the Hebrew monarchy and the long sojourn of the Jews in captivity had profoundly altered their thought and life. With the disappearance of their political state, the Jews thought more of an ecclesiastical state. Their thoughts turned from present humiliation to future glory. The priesthood acquired a new prominence in Jewish life, and the outward ceremonies of worship received a new emphasis.<sup>2</sup>

This revolution in the social and religious life of the Jews is reflected, to a greater or less degree, in the writings of the post-exilic prophets. There is no longer the deep ethical spirit that belonged to Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, and that made these men heroic in the service of righteousness. In place of an irrepressible indignation over individual and social wrongs, there is anxious concern

<sup>1</sup> Zeph. 3: 14-17.

<sup>2</sup> "In the place of the monarchy rose the hierarchy. The old military and royal aristocracy also vanished, and instead appeared a priestly nobility, with the high priest at its head. Israel became literally 'a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' The radical change in the external organization of the Jewish race was but an index of the deeper fact that its energies had been turned into entirely different channels. Ritual and religion, not politics, commanded the attention of its leaders." — KENT, "History of the Jewish People," Vol. III., p. 94.

for the outward forms of religion. In this post-exilic period was laid the foundation of the Pharisaic formalism that aroused the moral indignation of Christ.

**Haggai.** — The short prophecy of Haggai deals with the rebuilding of the temple under Zerubbabel. It consists of a summary of four discourses which the prophet delivered at brief intervals. It is partly in prose and partly in poetry; but nowhere does it reach a very high literary excellence. Still it is possible to undervalue it; and, as Cornill remarks, "in its very simplicity and modesty, as the utterance of a heart deeply moved by a striking situation, it has something uncommonly attractive, and even pathetic."<sup>1</sup> As we are able to determine from the definite statements of time in the prophecy, the several discourses were delivered between September and December in the year 520 B.C.

The occasion of the first discourse shows us the pious spirit of the prophet, who appears to have been an old man. It was now sixteen years since the Jewish exiles had returned from Babylon; and though many of them possessed wealth, and lived in luxurious houses, the temple remained unbuilt. The prophet reproaches the people for their neglect, and at the same time interprets a failure of crops as a mark of Jehovah's displeasure: —

"Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in ceiled houses,  
And this house lie waste?  
Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts: Consider your ways.  
Ye have sown much and bring in little;  
Ye eat, but ye have not enough;  
Ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink;  
Ye clothe you, but there is none warm;  
And he that earneth wages, earneth wages to put into a bag with  
holes."

<sup>1</sup> Cornill, "Einleitung in das Alte Testament," p. 198.

This appeal of the prophet was not fruitless. The governor and the high priest, supported by all the people, diligently set about the work of completing the temple.

**A Word of Encouragement.**—A few weeks later the prophet found it necessary to speak a word of encouragement to the people. There seems to have been a lack of materials; and the aged few, who remembered the splendor of the former temple, were depressed by the sickening contrast. But the prophet assures them of Jehovah's favor, and declares that the munificence of the nations, whom God will move, will give a surpassing glory to the new structure:—

“Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory?

And how do ye see it now?

Is it not in your eyes in comparison with it as nothing?

Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord;

And be strong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest;

And be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work.

And I will shake all nations, and the desirable things of all nations shall come,

And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.

The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, saith the Lord of hosts.

The glory of the latter house shall be greater than of the former,

And in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.”

**Last Discourses.**—Some two months later, the prophet again encourages the people with the promise of God's blessing. Some day Zerubbabel is assured that in the impending catastrophe of the nations, he will be favored and exalted of the Lord:—

“I will shake the heavens and the earth;

And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms,

And I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen;

And I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them;

And the horses and their riders shall come down,

Every one by the sword of his brother.



In that day, saith the Lord of hosts,  
Will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, My servant.  
And will make thee as a signet ; for I have chosen thee,  
Saith the Lord of hosts."

**Zechariah.** — The prophet Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai, and united with him in exhorting the governor and the high priest of Jerusalem to proceed with the rebuilding of the temple. As we read in Ezra, "The prophets, Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem."<sup>1</sup> It was in consequence of their united labors that Zerubbabel and Joshua "began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem."

As we learn from the introduction, the first discourse of Zechariah was delivered just two months after Haggai had entered upon his prophetic mission. It was "in the eighth month, in the second year of Darius"; that is, in November, 520 B.C. The immediate occasion was probably the discouragement which, as we know from Haggai, early beset the people in their work.<sup>2</sup> In his first discourse the prophet warns the people against imitating the sins of their fathers, and exhorts them to turn in loyalty to Jehovah: —

"Turn ye unto Me, saith the Lord of hosts,  
And I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts."

**Twofold Division.** — The prophecy of Zechariah is clearly divided into two parts. The first part, including the first eight chapters, has to do with the people of Judah. It is unquestionably the work of Zechariah, and arose out of the circumstances of the restoration.

The second part, including the last six chapters, is of a totally different character. There are new superscriptions ;

<sup>1</sup> Ezra 5 : 1.

<sup>2</sup> See Hag. 2 : 1-9.

there is no reference to Zerubbabel and Joshua; and the whole historic background is unlike that of the restoration period. For these reasons, the second part has been ascribed to another and unknown author,<sup>1</sup> who is supposed to have written at a much later period.

**A Series of Visions.** — The first six chapters (chapters 1 : 7-6 : 8) comprise a series of noteworthy visions, which are evidently designed for the encouragement of the people at Jerusalem. In the first vision the divine messengers, who go to and fro through the earth, report a state of peace among the nations. There are no signs of the crisis that is to usher in the Messianic kingdom. Nevertheless, Jehovah reassures the people of His favor : —

“I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies :  
My house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts,  
And a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.”<sup>2</sup>

In a second vision four horns, representing the world powers hostile to Israel, are broken by four smiths. In chapter 2 there is a vision of a man with a measuring rod, who goes forth to lay out the boundaries of the new Jerusalem. It is to be without walls; for its population will be unlimited, and its defence will be Jehovah : —

“Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls  
For the multitude of men and cattle therein :  
For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire round about,  
And will be the glory in the midst of her.”<sup>3</sup>

The fourth and fifth visions are intended for the special encouragement respectively of the high priest Joshua and the civil governor Zerubbabel : —

<sup>1</sup> Matthew quotes Zech. 11 : 12 as the words of Jeremiah. See Matt. 27 : 9.

<sup>2</sup> Zech. 1 : 16.

<sup>3</sup> Zech. 2 : 4, 5.

“Not by might, nor by power,  
 But by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.  
 Who art thou, O great mountain?  
 Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain;  
 And he shall bring forth the head-stone thereof  
 With shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it.”<sup>1</sup>

In the fifth and sixth chapters there are three other visions, — the flying roll, the ephah measure, and the four chariots. These are followed by an appendix, in which the prophet is commanded to make a crown for Zerubbabel and Joshua.<sup>2</sup> The ceremony<sup>1</sup> of coronation brings forth a beautiful Messianic promise: —

“Behold the man whose name is the Branch;  
 And he shall grow up out of his place,  
 And he shall build the temple of the Lord:  
 Even he shall build the temple of the Lord;  
 And he shall bear the glory,  
 And shall sit and rule upon his throne;  
 And he shall be a priest upon his throne:  
 And the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”<sup>3</sup>

**Fasting and Righteousness.** — Some two years after this series of visions, Zechariah delivered another discourse which is recorded in the seventh and eighth chapters. The occasion was an interesting one. A deputation from Bethel came to Jerusalem to inquire whether the custom of fasting, as it had been practised in captivity, was still to be observed. Zechariah, in his answer, exhibits the spirit

<sup>1</sup> Zech. 4: 6, 7.

<sup>2</sup> This appears, from the plural *crowns* and from verse 13, to be the meaning. If this emendation be correct, the following beautiful passage is addressed primarily to Zerubbabel and Joshua, the former the civil and the latter the ecclesiastical head of Jerusalem. But some biblical scholars, like Wellhausen, think that the name of Joshua in the text has been substituted for that of Zerubbabel, — a view that does not seem to harmonize with what follows.

<sup>3</sup> Zech. 6: 12, 13.

of the older prophets, and places righteousness far above fasting : —

“Execute true judgment,  
And show mercy and compassions every man to his brother ;  
And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless,  
The stranger, nor the poor ;  
And let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.”<sup>1</sup>

Continuing the same discourse in the eighth chapter, the prophet gives assurances of the lasting favor of God and of the future prosperity of Zion. Even nations from afar will come to worship at Jerusalem : —

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts :  
It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people,  
And the inhabitants of many cities :  
And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying,  
Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord,  
And to seek the Lord of hosts ; and I will go also.  
Yea, many peoples and strong nations shall come  
To seek the Lord of hosts, in Jerusalem, and to pray before the Lord.”<sup>2</sup>

**Zion's King.** — In passing to the second part of Zechariah we encounter difficulties. The prophet often veils his meaning in symbolism. “The latter chapters,” as Wellhausen truly says, “soar far above the field of reality ; the historical situation from which they start can hardly be recognized ; and the future hope has very little connection with the present. The fundamental difference between the two parts of the book lies not in the subject but in the nature of the prophecy, — in the first part realistic and almost prosaic, in the second vague and fantastic.”<sup>3</sup>

In chapter 9 there is apparently a description of Alexander's conquests, which include the destruction of

<sup>1</sup> Zech. 7 : 8-10.

<sup>2</sup> Zech. 8 : 20-22.

<sup>3</sup> Wellhausen, “Encyclopædia Britannica,” *Zechariah*.

Damascus, Tyre, and the cities of the Philistines. Then, by the law of association, the prophet suddenly passes to the victories of the Messiah:—

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion;  
Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem;  
Behold, thy King cometh unto thee:  
He is just, and having salvation;  
Lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.  
And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim,  
And the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle-bow shall be cut off:  
And he shall speak peace unto the heathen;  
And His dominion shall be from sea even to sea,  
And from the river even to the ends of the earth.”

The prophecy closes with a bright picture of the day when all the nations shall acknowledge Jehovah:—

“And it shall come to pass,  
That every one that is left of all the nations which came against  
Jerusalem  
Shall even go up from year to year  
To worship the King, the Lord of hosts,  
And to keep the feast of tabernacles.”<sup>1</sup>

**Malachi.**—The book of Malachi, though not the latest of the Old Testament writings, makes a fitting conclusion. Its closing words speak of a messenger who is to prepare the way for “the great and dreadful day of the Lord”:—

“Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet  
Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord:  
And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children,  
And the heart of the children to their fathers,  
Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.”

With these words of promise and hope, the book of Malachi forms a natural transition from the Old to the New Testament.

<sup>1</sup> Zech. 14: 16.

As to the author, nothing is known. His very name is a matter of doubt; for the word Malachi, which means *messenger*, may designate an office rather than a person. It was so understood by the translators of the Septuagint version. There is no reference to the time when the prophecy was uttered; yet the subject-matter of the book enables us to fix approximately its date. Its mention of a governor<sup>1</sup> shows that Judah was a Persian province; the temple has been rebuilt, and public worship is formally celebrated.<sup>2</sup> These facts clearly place Malachi in the post-exilic period.

But we are able to determine its date still more definitely. The prophecy particularly attacks the faithlessness of the priesthood, the intermarriage of the Jews with alien women, and remissness in the payment of the temple dues. These are precisely the evils that we meet with in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah. It is evident therefore that Malachi belongs to the period of these two distinguished leaders; but whether he preceded them or lived contemporary with them is a disputed question among biblical scholars. A probable opinion is that he wrote during Nehemiah's absence at the Persian court;<sup>3</sup> and in that case his prophecy is to be dated about 432 B.C.

**Assurance of Divine Favor.** — The prophecy itself reveals to us the social and religious condition that called it forth. The brilliant expectations of the returning exiles had not been realized; a spirit of worldliness had seized upon the ruling classes; doubt and unbelief troubled the whole community. In the opening words of his prophecy, Malachi assures them of the divine favor by dwelling on the contrasted destinies of Israel and Edom: —

<sup>1</sup> See Mal. i: 8.

<sup>2</sup> Mal. i: 7, 8.

<sup>3</sup> See Neh. i3: 6.



“I have loved you, saith the Lord :  
Yet ye say, Wherein hast Thou loved us?  
Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? saith the Lord ;  
Yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau,  
And laid his mountains and his heritage waste  
For the dragons of the wilderness.”

This passage shows us a peculiarity of Malachi’s style. It contains a large dialogue element. The prophet regularly states a proposition ; then he repeats the objection or inquiry that is supposed to be made ; and lastly he expands or demonstrates his first proposition.

**Sins of the Priests.** — Having established the fact of Jehovah’s love, which many of the people had come to doubt, the prophet proceeds to his indictment of the priesthood ; and because of their profanation of the altar through unworthy offerings, he threatens them with divine judgment :—

“A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master ;  
If then I be a father, where is Mine honor?  
And if I be a master, where is My fear?  
Saith the Lord of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise My name.  
And ye say, Wherein have we despised Thy name?  
Ye offer polluted bread upon My altar ;  
And ye say, Wherein have we polluted Thee?  
In that ye say, The table of the Lord is contemptible.”<sup>1</sup>

In expressing the indignation of Jehovah at the polluted service of the priests, the prophet for a moment casts his eyes beyond the borders of Israel. He catches a glimpse of that broader day when God will be honored among all nations. Nowhere else in the Old Testament do we find a more generous contemplation of the Gentile world. This fact is all the more remarkable, because Malachi, like the

<sup>1</sup> Mal. i : 6, 7.

other post-exilic prophets, places great emphasis on Jewish ritual. Listen to the words addressed to a sceptical and careless priesthood:—

“I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts,  
Neither will I accept an offering at your hand.  
For from the rising of the sun, even unto the going down of the  
same,  
My name shall be great among the Gentiles ;  
And in every place incense shall be offered unto My name,  
And a pure offering :  
For My name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of  
hosts.”<sup>1</sup>

**Alien Wives.** — The prophecy of Malachi is closely wrought together. After reproving the unworthy priests, the prophet arraigns the people for divorcing their Jewish wives, and marrying heathen women. This was a violation of the solemn covenant previously made under the influence of Ezra,<sup>2</sup> and accordingly invited the utmost severity of Jehovah's punishment:—

“Judah has dealt treacherously,  
And an abomination is committed in Israel and in Jerusalem ;  
For Judah hath profaned the holiness of the Lord, which He loved,  
And hath married the daughter of a strange god.  
The Lord will cut off the man that doeth this,  
The master and the scholar, out of the tabernacles of Jacob,  
And him that offereth an offering unto the Lord of hosts.”<sup>3</sup>

In this connection the prophet gives a pathetic picture of the wronged women of Judah. They cover the altar with tears; and in sympathy with their suffering, the Lord turns away from the priestly offerings:—

“And this have ye done again,  
Covering the altar of the Lord with tears,

<sup>1</sup> Mal. 1: 10, 11.

<sup>2</sup> See Ezra 10.

<sup>3</sup> Mal. 2: 11, 12.

With weeping and with crying out,  
Insomuch that He regardeth not the offering any more,  
Or receiveth it with good will at your hand."

**A Day of Judgment.** — The prophet turns next to the coming day of the Lord. In their moral decadence the people lost their consciousness of a distinction between good and evil. Though the older prophets had repeatedly spoken of a day of judgment, the sensual and worldly minded contemporaries of Malachi were outspoken in their scepticism about its coming: —

"Ye have wearied the Lord with your words :  
Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied Him?  
When ye say, Every one that doeth evil  
Is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delighteth in them ;  
Or, Where is the God of Judgment?" <sup>1</sup>

In reply to this moral confusion and open scepticism, the prophet declares that the Lord will suddenly come in judgment. But the day of the Lord is not to be a great day of battle ; it is to be a day of purifying, in which the righteous will be winnowed from the wicked : —

"And I will come near to you in judgment ;  
And I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers,  
And against the adulterers, and against false swearers,  
And against those that oppress the hireling in his wages,  
The widow, and the fatherless,  
And that turneth aside the stranger from his right,  
And fear not Me, saith the Lord of hosts." <sup>2</sup>

In all this there is a momentary return of the fine ethical sense of the older prophets who exalt righteousness above ritual.

**Promise of Blessing.** — The prophet next charges the people with robbing God by withholding their tithes and

<sup>1</sup> Mal. 2 : 17.

<sup>2</sup> Mal. 3 : 5.

offerings. For this reason the land had been visited by drought and locust. The prophet exhorts the people to reformation, and promises them illimitable blessings : —

“ Ye are cursed with a curse ;  
 For ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation.  
 Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse,  
 That there may be meat in Mine house,  
 And prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts,  
 If I will not open the windows of heaven,  
 And pour you out a blessing,  
 That there shall not be room enough to receive it.” <sup>1</sup>

**Triumph of the Righteous.** — Once more, before he ends his work, the prophet silences the voice of unbelief. The people complained that “ it is vain to serve God.” They asserted that the proud were happy and the wicked prosperous. In reply to this ever recurring complaint of unbelief, the prophet declares that in due time God will recognize His own, and that in the fires of that day “ all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble ” : —

“ And a book of remembrance was written before Him,  
 For them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name.  
 And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts,  
 In that day when I make up My jewels.” <sup>2</sup>

**Conclusion.** — We close our studies in the Old Testament with the beautiful words of Kuenen : “ As we watch the weaving of the web of Hebrew life, we endeavor to trace through it the more conspicuous threads. Long time the eye follows the crimson ; it disappears at length ; but the golden thread of sacred prophecy continues to the end. The prophets teach us to live and to struggle ; to believe with immovable firmness ; to hope even when all is dark

<sup>1</sup> Mal. 3 : 9, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Mal. 3 : 16, 17.

around us; to trust the voice of God in our inmost consciousness; and to speak with boldness and with power." <sup>1</sup>

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### RESEARCH WORK

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Farrar's "The Bible: its Meaning and Supremacy," p. 273.

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